Mirror of Perfection

by Brother Leo of Assisi

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PREFACE

The Mirror of Perfection of the Blessed Francis belongs properly to polemical literature; it is an argument taken from the acts and words of Saint Francis in favour of what a party within the Franciscan Order considered to be the true Franciscan life. As is well known, there arose in the very early days of the Franciscan Order a conflict of opinion as to whether the Friars should abide in their primitive simplicity and unconventional poverty or, in view of new circumstances, approximate more closely to the institutions of other religious orders. That was really the essential question at issue.

With the growth of the Order and the extension of its activities, some development or change of organisation was needed. It was manifest to the body of the Friars that the simple arrangements and idyllic unconventionality of the first days must give place to a more formal organisation, if the vast number of Friars shortly to be scattered throughout Europe were not to degenerate into an undisciplined crowd. Under any circumstances there would have been a peculiar difficulty in adapting the Franciscan life to the practical needs of a widespread organisation, because of the singular idealism in which the Order had its spiritual origin. Among religious orders the Franciscan was unique, because the very reason of its existence was to open the way for the life of perfect poverty and unworldly simplicity for which so many religious souls in the Middle Ages were athirst. How to preserve this exalted idealism, whilst recognising the practical needs of a prosaic world in which the Friar must live and work, was the great problem which faced the Order in the latter days of Saint Francis. The difficulty was increased by an active party among the Friars who sought to remould the Order upon conventional lines, with but little

regard to the primitive Franciscan spirit and idealism. The contention which thus began in the days of Saint Francis, became more acute after his death; it lasted throughout the thirteenth century and eventually resulted in the division of the Order into various "families" with separate jurisdictions.

The Mirror of Perfection originated in the controversy and voices the opposition toward a line of development which many of the Friars deemed inconsistent with the original purpose and spirit of the Franciscan Order. It was probably composed about the end of the thirteenth century or at the beginning of the fourteenth. To speak of it as a "Legend" (in he mediaeval sense of the word) would be incorrect: it really is a "memorial" compiled from earlier documents and designed to set forth what he compiler and those of like mind with him considered the true life of a Friar Minor according to the intentions of Saint Francis. Such memorials" were not uncommon about the and of the thirteenth century. Their purpose ivas not merely to protest against the "party of elaxation," but also to foster and strengthen the party of "strict observance." The *Fioretti* in its original Latin text, belongs to this category. To understand the workmanship of these "memorials," we must remember that among the Friars who adhered to the primitive ideal, the writings of the companions of Saint Francis and their disciples were fondly treasured; and so, too, were the oral traditions handed down from generation to generation. These writings and traditions were a sort of charter of the spiritual freedom of the observants. It was from these early writings and traditions that the memorialists drew their material. In the case of the *Mirror of Perfection* there can be little doubt that the compiler had in his hands a copy of the writings of Brother Leo, the beloved disciple of Saint Francis, and of those companions of the saint, who, as we know, at the insistence of the Minister-General Crescentius,

committed to writing their remembrances of the acts and words of Saint Francis.

From the writings of these companions Thomas of Celano wrote his *Legenda Secunda*. Now, in the *Mirror of Perfection* there are 86 passages which correspond almost identically with the *Legenda Secunda*; but a critical comparison between the two texts leaves hardly any doubt that in the *Mirror of Perfection* we have, if not the original text itself of the writings of the companions, at least a more faithful version than that of Celano. Other passages, 10 in number, are almost certainly taken directly from the independent writings of Brother Leo, since they are authenticated by Ubertino da Casale who had in his hands the *rotuli* of Brother Leo. As to the remainder of the *Mirror of Perfection*, it is not improbable that here, too, he compiler drew upon early documents preserved among the observant Friars.

We have, then, in this book a genuine witness to the life and mind of Saint Francis; and yet reading it one must remember its polemical purpose and make allowance for the Dolemical temperament. Even the companions of Saint Francis, when they wrote, were not free from the polemical temper. They wrote with an eye to certain abuses or departures from the primitive ideal, which they were out to combat. Consequently, to know "the real Saint Francis" we have need to supplement our knowledge from other sources, and we must put ourselves into a calmer atmosphere of thought than that the writers of this book, before we draw our ultimate conclusions.

But there is one value attaching to the Mirror of Perfection and its kindred "memorials" which we owe to the very polemical purpose and temper in which they were written and compiled. They bear witness the spiritual fervour with which a large body of the Franciscans cherished the original

spirit and idealism of their Order. We have heard a great deal of "the early decline" of the Franciscans from their primitive ideals: we hear less from modern historians of the long continuance of the original idealism among a large section of the Friars, from which sprang that succession of reforms which is the true story of "The Lady Poverty" throughout the first three centuries of the Franciscan history.

The *Mirror of Perfection*, like the *Fioretti*, finds its true place in the history of the enduring endeavour within the Franciscan Order to maintain the primitive spirit and idealism of Saint Francis. As a witness to that endeavour it will be cherished by all who see in religion a constant Struggle of the spirit against their seductive "prudence of the flesh."

- Father Cuthbert, O.S.F.C.

SECTION I

This book was compiled as a legend from certain ancient ones which the fellows of blessed Francis wrote and caused to be written in diverse places: and note that blessed Francis made three Rules, namely that which Pope Innocent III. confirmed without a bull. Again, he made another, shorter, namely that which he made on account of the vision revealed to him of the small host he was bidden to make from the fragments offered him and share out to those who would eat, and this Rule was lost, as is told after. Then he made another which Pope Honorius confirmed with a bull, from which Rule many things were removed by the Ministers against the will of blessed Francis as is contained hereafter

CHAPTER I

HOW SAINT FRANCIS ANSWERED HIS MINISTERS WHEN THEY WOULD NOT BE BOUND TO OBSERVE THE RULE WHICH HE WAS MAKING

After the second Rule which blessed Francis made had been lost, he went up into a certain mountain with Brother Leo of Assisi and Brother Bonyzo of Bologna to make another Rule, which, by the teaching of Christ, he caused to be written down. But many Ministers being gathered together to Brother Elias (who was the vicar of blessed Francis) said to him, "We have heard that this Brother Francis makes a new Rule, but we fear lest he make it so harsh that we may not observe it. Therefore we will that you go to him and say that we will not be bound to that Rule; let him make it for himself and not for us." To whom Brother Elias answered that he would not go without them, and then all went together. And when Brother Elias was near the place where blessed Francis was, Brother Elias called him. To whom answering, and beholding the aforesaid Ministers, the blessed Father said, "What would these brethren?" And Brother Elias said, "These are Ministers, who hearing that you art making a new Rule, and fearing lest you should make it too harsh, do say and protest that they will not be bound to it: make it for thyself and not for them." Then blessed Francis turned his face to heaven and spoke thus to Christ, "Lord, said I not well to You that they would not believe me?" Then all heard the voice of Christ answering in the air, "So do it, there is nought of thine in the Rule, but whatever is there is Mine, and I will that the Rule should thus be observed to the letter, without a gloss, without a gloss!" And He added, "What human weakness can, do I know, and how much I wish to help them; let those therefore who will not obey it, go oat from the Order!" Then blessed Francis turned himself to those brethren and said to them, "Will you that I should cause it to be said to you again?" Then the Ministers, looking upon one another, went back confused and terrified.

SECTION II

OF THE PERFECTION OF POVERTY

CHAPTER II

FIRSTLY HOW BLESSED FRANCIS DECLARED THE WILL AND INTENTION WHICH HE HAD FROM THE BEGINNING UNTO THE END, CONCERNING THE OBSERVANCE OF POVERTY

Brother Richard of March, noble by birth and more noble by holiness, whom blessed Francis did love with great affection, on a certain day visited blessed Francis in the palace of the Bishop of Assisi, and among other things of which they conversed concerning the state of the Religion and the observance of the Rule, asked him specially of this matter, saying, "Tell me, Father, your intention which you hadst from the beginning when you didst begin to have brethren, and the intention which you now have and dost think to have unto the day of your death, that I may bear witness of your intention and will, first and last, whether, for example, we friars who be clerks, and have many books, may have them, provided we say that they belong to the Order." Blessed Francis said to him, "I tell you, Brother, that this was and is my first intention and last desire, if the brethren would have believed me, that no friar should have anything save a robe, as our Rule allows, with a girdle and breeches."

But if any friar should be minded to say, "Why did not blessed Francis in his own time make the Rule and Poverty to be as strictly observed by the friars as he said to Richard, nor command it should thus be observed?" We who were with him answer to this as we have heard from his own mouth, since he himself said these and many other things to the brethren, and also made many of these things to be written in the Rule which he had besought of the Lord with

earnest prayer and meditation for the benefit of the Order, affirming them to be altogether according to the will of God; but after he showed these things to the brethren they seemed to them burdensome and not to be borne, not knowing then what things should come to pass in the Order after his death. And because he greatly feared scandal both towards himself and the brethren, he would not strive with them, but suffered, unwillingly, their will, and excused himself before the Lord. But that the word which the Lord had put into his mouth for the benefit of the brethren might not return unto Him empty, he wished to fulfill it in himself that from thence some reward might be obtained from the Lord, and in the end his spirit found rest herein and was consoled.

CHAPTER III

HOW HE ANSWERED A MINISTER WHO WISHED TO HAVE BOOKS WITH HIS LEAVE; AND HOW THE MINISTERS WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE CAUSED THE CHAPTER OF THE PROHIBITIONS OF THE GOSPEL TO BE REMOVED FROM THE RULE

But on a time, when blessed Francis was returned from over-sea, a certain Minister was speaking with him of the Chapter of Poverty, wishing to know his will and understanding thereon, and chiefly — for at that time a certain chapter of the Prohibitions of the Holy Gospel was written in the Rule, namely, "Take nothing with ye in the way." And the blessed Father answered, "I understand it thus, that friars should possess naught save a robe with a cord and breeches, as says the Rule, and if they are forced by necessity they may wear sandals." And the Minister said to him, "What shall I do, who have so many books that they be worth more than fifty pounds?" (but this he said for that he would have them with a good conscience, since against it he had owned so many

books, knowing that blessed Francis understood the Chapter of Poverty so strictly). And blessed Francis said to him, "I neither will, nor ought, nor can, go against my conscience and the perfection of the Holy Gospel which we have professed." Hearing these things the Minister became sad. But the blessed one, seeing him thus troubled, with great fervour of spirit said to him in the presence of all the brethren, "You would be seen of men as Friars Minor, and be called observants of the Holy Gospel, but for your works you wish to have store-chests!"

Yet though the Ministers knew that according to the Rule friars were bound to observe the Holy Gospel, nevertheless they caused that chapter to be removed from the Rule, "Take nothing with you in the way," believing that therefor they would not be held to the observance of the perfection of the Gospel. Knowing which by the Holy Spirit, blessed Francis said therefore before certain brethren, "The brothers Ministers think to deceive God and me; though they know that all friars are bound to observe the perfection of the Holy Gospel. I will that it be written in the beginning and in the end of the Rule that friars are bound to strictly observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that the brethren be for ever without excuse, since I have announced and do announce to them those things which the Lord for their and my salvation placed in my mouth. I wish to show it by my works in the presence of God, and with His aid to observe it for ever." Whence he observed to the letter all the Holy Gospel from the first time when brethren began to join themselves to him unto the day of his death.

CHAPTER IV

OF THE NOVICE WHO WOULD FAIN HAVE A PSALTER WITH HIS LEAVE

On another time a certain brother novice who knew how to read the psalter, though not well, obtained from the Minister-General leave to have one; yet, because he heard that blessed Francis wished his brethren not to desire knowledge and books, he was not content to have it without the leave of blessed Francis. When therefore blessed Francis had come to the place where that novice was, the novice said, "Father, it would be a great solace to me to have a psalter, but though the General has conceded it to me, yet I wish to have it, Father, with your knowledge." To whom the blessed Francis answered, "Charles the Emperor, Roland and Oliver, and all the Paladins and strong men, being mighty in war, chasing the infidels with much travail and sweat to the death, had over them notable victory, and at the last themselves did die in battle, holy martyrs for the faith of Christ; but now there are many who would fain receive honours and human praise for the mere telling of the things which those others did. So also among ourselves are many who would fain receive honours and praise by reciting and preaching only the works which the saints did." (As if he would say, "Books and science should not be esteemed, but rather virtuous labours, since knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies.") But after a few days, when blessed Francis was sitting at the fire, the same novice spoke to him again of the psalter. And blessed Francis said to him, "After you have a psalter, you will desire and wish to have a breviary. Then you will sit in your chair, like a great prelate, and say to your brother, 'Bring me the breviary'? "So saying, blessed Francis with great fervour of spirit took up some ashes and put them on his head, and drawing his hand over his head in a compass like one who washes the head, said, "I, a breviary, I, a breviary!" And he repeated it thus many times, drawing his hand over his head. And that brother was amazed and ashamed. Afterwards blessed Francis said to him, "Brother, I likewise was tempted to have books, but when I might not know the will of the Lord concerning this, I took up a book

wherein the Gospels of the Lord were written, and I prayed the Lord that in the first opening of the book He would show me His will concerning this thing. And when the prayer was finished in the first opening of the book I lighted on that saying of the Holy Gospel: Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but unto others in parables." And he said, "There are so many who willingly rise unto knowledge, that he shall be blessed who makes himself barren for the love of God." But many months having passed, when blessed Francis was at the dwelling of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, near the cell beyond the house in the street, the aforesaid brother spoke again to him of the psalter. To whom blessed Francis said, "Go and do concerning this what your Minister tells you." And when he heard this, that brother began to return by the road whence he had come. And blessed Francis remaining in the street began to consider what he had said to that brother, and immediately called after him, saying, "Wait for me, brother, wait!" And he came up to him, and said to him, "Turn back with me, brother, and show me the place where I said unto you that you should do in the matter of the psalter as your Minister should say." When therefore they had arrived at the place, blessed Francis kneeled before that brother, and said, "Mea culpa, brother, mea culpa, for whosoever will be a Friar Minor should have nothing except a tunic, as the Rule concedes to him, and a cord and breeches, and those who are forced by manifest necessity, sandals." Whence as often as friars came to him to have his counsel on these matters, he used to answer them on this wise, because, as he often used to say, "As much knowledge hath a man as he doth work, and a Religious is as good a speaker as his works proclaim, for the worker is known by his fruit."

CHAPTER V

OF KEEPING POVERTY IN BOOKS AND BEDS AND UTENSILS

The most blessed Father used to say that we should look for proof and not price in books, edification not ornament. He wished that few be owned and those in common, befitting the poverty and necessity of friars. In beds and bedding so great poverty abounded, that he who had half-worn-out rags over his chaff reputed them mattresses.

He taught further his friars to make their huts poor and their little cabins of wood, not of stone, and he would have them be constructed and built of mean appearance, and not only did he hate pride in dwellings, but also he did much abhor many or choice utensils. He loved that they should preserve in their tables or in their vessels nothing of worldly seeming, by which they should recall the world, so that all things should end in poverty, should sing out to them of their pilgrimage and exile.

CHAPTER VI

HOW HE MADE ALL THE FRIARS DEPART FROM A CERTAIN HOUSE WHICH WAS CALLED THE HOUSE OF THE FRIARS

When he was passing through Bologna he heard that a House of Friars had been newly built there. And immediately when he had heard that house called the House of the Friars, he turned on his steps and went out of the city, and ordered most strictly that all the friars should depart in haste, and no longer dwell therein. Therefore all the friars went out, so that even the sick did not remain there, but were turned out with the others, until Dom Hugo, Bishop of Ostia, and Legate in Lombardy, publicly announced that the said house belonged to him. And a sick friar who was turned out from that same house bears witness to these things and wrote these words.

CHAPTER VII

HOW HE WOULD FAIN DESTROY A CERTAIN HOUSE WHICH THE FOLK OF ASSISI HAD MADE AT SAINT MARY OF THE PORTIUNCULA

When the Chapter-General was drawing near which took place each year at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, the people of Assisi, considering that the friars were daily multiplying, and that every year all were used to assemble together there, although they had but one small cell thatched with straw whose walls were of wattle and mud, having held their council, did in a few days with very great devotion and respect build there a great house of stone and lime, without the consent of blessed Francis, and in his absence. And when the blessed Father returned from a certain province and came thither for the Chapter, he marvelled greatly at that house constructed there, and fearing lest by occasion of that house other friars would cause to be made likewise great houses in the places in which they dwelt and should dwell, and because he wished that place to be the form and example of all other places of the Order, before the Chapter was finished he went up on the roof of that house, and ordered the friars to come up with him, and together with those friars he began to throw down on the ground the laths with which the house had been covered, being fain to destroy it even to the foundations. But certain men-at-arms of Assisi who were there to guard the place on account of the crowds of rabble who had come together to see the Chapter of the Friars, seeing that blessed Francis with other friars wished to pull the house to pieces, forthwith went to him and said, "Brother, this house belongs to the Commune of Assisi, and we be here on the part of that Commune. Whence we forbid you to destroy our house." Hearing this, blessed Francis said to them, "Therefore if it be yours, I will not touch it." And straightway he and the friars came down from it. (For which cause the folk of the City of Assisi made a law that from that time forth their Podesta, whoever he

should be, should cause that house to be repaired. And every year for a long time this law was observed.)

CHAPTER VIII

HOW HE BLAMED HIS VICAR BECAUSE HE WAS MAKING A LITTLE HOUSE TO BE BUILT FOR SAYING THE OFFICE

On another time the Vicar of blessed Francis began to have built in that place a little house where the friars might rest and say their Hours, since for the multitude of friars who came to that place they had no place wherein to say the Office. For all the brethren of the Order came together there, because no one was received into the Order save only there. And now, when the house was complete, blessed Francis returned to that place, and being in that cell heard the noises of those labouring there, and calling to him his companion he asked him what those brethren were doing. To whom his companion told all things as they were. Then forthwith he caused the Vicar to be called, and said to him, "Brother, this place is the form and example of the whole Order, and I would therefore rather that the friars of this place should bear tribulation and inconveniences for the love of the Lord God, and that other friars who come hither should carry away with them a good example of poverty to their own place, than that they should have their consolations fully, and that others should take an example of building in their own places, saying, 'In this place of Blessed Mary of the Portiuncula, which is the chief place of the Order, there are such and so great buildings; we also may well build in our own places.'"

CHAPTER IX

HOW HE WOULD NOT REMAIN IN A SPECIALLY MADE CELL OR IN ONE WHICH WAS CALLED HIS OWN

A certain brother, right spiritual and much familiar with blessed Francis, caused to be made in the hermitage wherein he was staying, a certain cell a little remote, wherein blessed Francis might stay at prayer when he should come thither. But when the holy Father came to that place that friar led him to the cell; to whom said blessed Francis, "This cell is too fair." (But it was only made of planks, rough hewn with an axe and a hatchet.) "If therefore you wouldst that I should remain there, cause to be made for it a covering within and without, of withies and branches of trees." (For the more poverty stricken were houses and cells, so much the more gladly would he remain there.) Which when that brother had done, blessed Francis remained there for some days. But on a day, when he had gone out of that cell, a certain friar went to see it, and afterward came to the place where blessed Francis was. And when the blessed Father saw him he said to him, "Whence come you, brother?" And he said, "I come from your cell." And blessed Francis said, "For that you have called it mine, another shall stay there henceforth, and not I." But we who were with him often heard him saying that word, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head. And again he said, "The Lord, when He remained in the open air and fasted forty days and forty nights, did not cause a cell to be made for Him there or a house, but lay under the rocks of the mountains." And therefore by His example he would have neither house nor cell which could be called his own, nor ever did he cause one to be made at all. If sometimes it happened that he said to the brethren, "Go and make ready that cell," he would not afterwards abide in it, because of that saying of the Holy Gospel, Be ye not anxious, etc. For even at the time of his death he made it to be written in his will that all the cells and houses of the friars should be of wood and mud only; for the better safeguard of poverty and humility.

CHAPTER X

CONCERNING THE MANNER OF CHOOSING PLACES IN CITIES, AND OF BUILDING IN THEM, ACCORDING TO THE INTENTION OF BLESSED FRANCIS

On a certain time when he was at Siena for the weakness of his eyes, Dom Bonaventura, who gave the land to the brethren on which the friary was built, said to him, "What think you of this place?" And blessed Francis said to him, "Wilt you that I tell you how the dwellings of friars should be built?" He answered, "I do wish it, Father." And the holy Father said, "When friars go to any city where they have no dwelling, and come upon any one willing to give them a place to build a house, and have a garden and all things necessary, they should firstly consider how much land is sufficient for them, having regard always to the poverty and the good example which in all things we are bound to show." (But this he said because he was in no wise willing that friars should possess any places by right of ownership, in the houses or churches or gardens or other things which they used, but should sojourn therein as travellers and pilgrims; and therefore he wished that friars should not be gathered together in great numbers in their dwellings, because it seemed to him difficult to observe poverty in a great multitude. And his intention from the beginning of his conversion even unto the end was that poverty should be altogether observed in all things.) "Having considered therefore the land necessary for a dwelling, the friars should go to the Bishop of the city and say unto him, 'Lord, such an one would give us so much land for the love of God, and for his soul's health, that we may build therein a dwelling. Wherefore we come to you, in the first place, because you are father and lord of souls of all the flock committed unto you, and of all our brethren who shall sojourn in that place; we would fain therefore, with God's blessing and yours, build

there.'" (But this he said because the harvest of souls which the friars would fain reap they do better obtain when they are in harmony with the clergy, profiting them even as the lay folk, than by causing them scandal, even though the people should be won thereby.) And he said, "The Lord hath called us to the aid of His faith, and of the clergy and prelates of the Holy Roman Church. And therefore we are bound, as much as we may, always to love and to honour and to reverence them." (For he called them Friars Minor that they should be humble like their name both in example and labour beyond other men of this age.) "And because from the beginning of my conversion He placed in the mouth of the Bishop of Assisi His words, that he should counsel me and well strengthen me in the service of Christ; on account of this and many other excellent things which I behold in prelates, I wish to love and venerate not only the bishops but also the poor priests, and to hold them for my lords."

Then, having received a blessing from the Bishop, let them go and make a great trench in the circuit of the land which they have received for building the dwelling, and let them set there a good hedge as their wall, as a sign of holy poverty and humility. Afterwards let them make poor little houses of wattle and dab, and some little cells in which from time to time the friars may pray and work, for greater seemliness, and to avoid sloth. Let them also build small churches, for they ought not to make great churches, neither to preach to the people, nor for any other reason, since their humility is greater and their example better when they go to other churches to preach. And if at any time prelates and clergy, regular or secular, come to their dwellings; the poor little houses, the little cells, and tiny churches will preach to them, and they will be more edified by these than by words." And he said, "Many times friars build great buildings, breaking our holy poverty, and cause an evil example and a murmuring and sometimes by occasion of a better and more

holy dwelling, or of a greater congregation of the people, through their covetousness and avarice they leave their former dwellings or buildings and destroy them and make others great and excessive, whence those who have given their alms there, and others likewise seeing this be scandalised and troubled therefor. For which cause it is better for friars to make small and poor little buildings, observing their profession and giving a good example to their neighbours, than that they should act against their promise, giving to others an evil example. For if the friars should on a time leave a lowly place by occasion of one more fitting, the scandal would be less."

CHAPTER XI

HOW FRIARS, AND ESPECIALLY THE PRELATES AND LEARNED AMONG THEM, WERE CONTRARY TO FRANCIS IN MAKING HUMBLE DWELLINGS AND HABITATIONS

But when blessed Francis had ordered that the friars' churches should be small, and their house be built only of wattle and dab, in token of holy poverty and humility, wishing this pattern to be set in the dwelling of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, that the houses should be constructed of wood and clay, so that it should be an everlasting memorial to all friars, present and to come, since that it was the first and principal place of the whole Order, certain friars were against him in this matter, saying that in some provinces beams were dearer than stones, so that it seemed not good to them that their houses should be made of wood and clay. But the blessed Father would not contend with them, the more because he was near death and was sore sickening. Wherefore he caused it to be written in his will, "Let friars beware of receiving churches and dwellings and all other buildings which be constructed for them save as becomes holy poverty; living there ever as guests and strangers and

pilgrims." But we who were with him when he wrote the Rule and well-nigh all his other writings bear testimony that he made many things to be written in the Rule and in his other writings (wherein many of the friars were against him, notably our prelates and learned folk) which would today have been very useful and necessary to the whole Order: but for that he greatly feared scandal, he suffered, though not willingly, the wishes of his brethren. Yet often he was used to say these words, "Woe to those friars who are contrary to me in this matter, which I firmly know to be of the Will of God for the greater usefulness and necessity of the whole Order, though unwillingly I bend myself to their will." Whence often he used to say to us, his fellows, "Herein is my grief and my affliction; that in those things which with much labour of prayer and meditation I obtain of God through His mercy, for the benefit, present and future, of the whole Order, and which I am assured by Him are according to His will, some brethren by the authority of their knowledge and false foresight are against me and make them void, saying, 'These things are to be held and observed, and these not.'"

CHAPTER XII

HOW HE COUNTED IT A THEFT TO GET ALMS OR TO USE THEM BEYOND NEED

Blessed Francis was used to say these words to his brethren, "I have never been a thief concerning alms, in getting them or using them beyond necessity. Always have I taken less than I needed, lest I should defraud other poor folk of their portion, for to do the contrary would have been theft."

CHAPTER XIII

HOW CHRIST SAID UNTO HIM THAT HE WOULD NOT THAT FRIARS SHOULD OWN AUGHT, NEITHER IN COMMON NOR IN SPECIAL

When the Ministers would have persuaded him that he should allow something to the friars in common at the least, so that the multitude should have that to which it might have recourse, blessed Francis called upon Christ in prayer and took counsel with Him thereon. Who straightway answered him, saying, "I confer all things in general and in special; I shall always be ready to provide for this family, however much it may increase, and ever will I cherish it as long as it shall hope in Me."

CHAPTER XIV

OF HIS HORROR OF MONEY, AND HOW HE PUNISHED A FRIAR FOR TOUCHING IT

As a true friend and imitator of Christ, Francis, despising perfectly all things which are of this world, did above all things execrate money; and by word and example urged his brethren to flee it as it were the devil. For this maxim had been given by him to the friars, that they should measure with one price of love, dung and money. Now it happened on a day that a certain layman entered the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula to pray, and put some money for an offering near the cross, which when he had departed, a certain friar taking innocently in his hand, threw into the window. But when this was told to blessed Francis, that friar seeing himself taken in a fault, sought pardon, and throwing himself on the ground, offered himself to punishment. The holy Father reproved him, and very severely blamed him for moving the money, and bade him lift the money from the window with his mouth, and convey it without the hedge of the dwelling, and put it with his own mouth on the dung of

an ass. And all they that did see and hear were filled with very great fear, and from that time forth did despise money more than the dung of an ass, and daily were they animated with new examples to contemn it altogether.

CHAPTER XV

OF AVOIDING SOFTNESS AND A MULTITUDE OF TUNICS, AND OF PATIENCE IN NECESSITY

This man, being clothed with virtue from on high, was warmed more within by a divine, than without by a bodily garment. He execrated those in the Order who were clad in threefold garments, and those who used softer clothing than was needful. But he was used to say that a necessity pointed out by will only and not by reason was a sign of a dead spirit, "For with lukewarm spirit and one cooling from grace, little by little flesh and blood must seek their own." And he used to say, "For what remains when the wish for spiritual delight is wanting, except that the flesh should turn to its own." And when animal appetite pleads the article of necessity, then the sense of the flesh fashions the conscience. But if true necessity is on my brother, and straightway he makes to satisfy it, what reward shall he receive? For an occasion of merit hath arisen, but he hath studiously proved that it displeased him. For not to bear patiently those wants is nothing other than to seek Egypt again." Never on any account would he that friars should have more than two tunics, though these he used to allow to be lined with pieces sewn together. He was accustomed to say that choice cloths were horrible, and he used to find fault very bitterly with those contrary to him, and that he might excite such by his own example, he was always used to sew rough sack upon his own tunic. Whence even in death he ordered his burial tunic to be covered with sackcloth. But to those friars whom infirmity or any other

necessity compelled, he allowed another soft tunic next the skin, but yet so that out of doors roughness and vileness should always be preserved in their bearing. For he was accustomed to say with very great grief, "Now shall rigour be so much relaxed and sloth shall rule, that the sons of a beggar father shall not be ashamed to wear even scarlet cloths, its colour only being changed."

CHAPTER XVI

HOW HE WOULD NOT SATISFY HIS OWN BODY

But when blessed Francis was staying at the hermitage of Saint Eleutherius, over against Rieti, on account of the great cold he lined his tunic and the tunic of his fellow Richer with some patches (because of custom he carried but one tunic), so that his body thence began to be some little cherished. And a little after when he had returned from prayer, he said with great joy to his fellow, "It behooves me to be the form and example of all the friars, and therefore though it be necessary to my body to have a lined tunic, yet must I consider my other brethren to whom the same is necessary, and who perchance have it not and cannot have it. Whence it behoves me to consider them, and bear the necessities they bear, that seeing this in me, they may be strong to suffer with great patience." But how many and how great necessities he denied his body that he might give a good example to his brethren, and that they might more patiently bear their needs, we who were with him can neither by words or by writing set forth. For after the friars began to be multiplied he set his chief and highest study in this, to teach his brethren rather by works than by words what they had to do or avoid.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW HE WAS ASHAMED TO SEE ANY ONE POORER THAN HIMSELF

Once when he had come on a certain poor man, considering his poverty, he said to his fellow, "The poverty of that man brings great shame upon us, and much rebukes ours. For very great shame it is to me when I find any one poorer than I am: since I have chosen holy poverty for my Lady, and for my spiritual and bodily riches: and this saying has gone out into the whole world, that I have professed poverty before God and man."

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW HE INDUCED AND TAUGHT THE FIRST FRIARS TO GO AND SEEK ALMS

When blessed Francis first began to have friars he rejoiced so much at their conversion, and that God had given to him a goodly fellowship, and loved and venerated them so much, that he did not bid them go for alms, and the more because it seemed to him that they were ashamed to go, for which reason their father went alone for alms. But when he was greatly fatigued by this, especially because he was well nurtured while he was in the world, and feeble of nature, and by too great abstinence and affliction up to that time was still more weakened, and considering that he could not bear such labour alone, and that they themselves were called to it, though they were ashamed to do it, because they did not yet fully know nor were they so discreet as to say, "We also wish to go seek alms." Therefore he said to them, "Dearest brethren and my little children, be not ashamed to go, for this is our heritage which our Lord Jesus Christ acquired and left to us and to all who wish by His example to live in holy poverty. In truth I say to you, that many of the more noble and more holy of this world shall

come to this congregation, and shall hold it for great honour and grace to go seek alms. Go, therefore, confident in mind and rejoicing with the benediction of God for alms; and ye ought the more willingly and rejoicingly to go for alms, than he who for one piece of money should return an hundred pence, since ye offer to them from whom you seek an alms the love of God, saying, 'For the love of God do us an alms-deed, in comparison with Whom heaven and earth are as nought.'" But because the brethren were so few, he could not send them two by two, but sent them one by one through villages and towns. And so it was that when they returned with the gifts which they had found, each of them showed to blessed Francis his alms which he had collected. And one used to say to another, "I have received more alms than you." And at this time the blessed Father was rejoiced, seeing them so merry and jocund. And from that time forward each of them more willingly sought leave to go beg alms.

CHAPTER XIX

HOW HE WOULD NOT THAT FRIARS SHOULD TAKE THOUGHT AND BE SOLICITOUS FOR THE MORROW

At that same time, when blessed Francis was living with the brethren whom he then had, he lived in such poverty with them, that they observed the Holy Gospel in and through all things to the letter, from that day in which the Lord revealed to him that he and his brethren should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel. Whence he forbade the brother who used to cook for the friars to put dried beans in warm water when they were to be given to the friars to eat on the following day, as the custom is, so that they might observe that saying of the Holy Gospel, Take no thought for the morrow. And so that brother put off setting them to soften till after Matins, because by then the day in which they were to

be eaten had begun. (On account of which many friars observed this rule in many places for a long time and would neither ask nor accept more alms than were necessary to them for one day; and this especially in cities.)

CHAPTER XX

HOW BY WORD AND EXAMPLE HE REBUKED THE FRIARS WHO HAD PREPARED A SUMPTUOUS TABLE ON CHRISTMAS DAY

When a certain Minister of the friars had come to blessed Francis to celebrate the feast of Christmas with him in the friars' dwelling at Rieti, the friars, because of the Minister and the feast, laid out the table a little worshipfully and choicely on that Christmas Day, putting on fair and white napery and glass vessels. But the blessed Father coming down from his cell to eat, saw the tables placed on high, and so choicely laid out. Then forthwith he went secretly, and took the staff and wallet of a certain poor man who had come thither that day, and calling to him with a low voice one of his fellows, went out to the door of the dwelling, the brethren of the house not knowing of it. But his fellow remained inside near the door. The friars in the meantime had entered to the table. For the blessed Father had ordered that the friars should not wait for him, when he did not come straightway at meal-time. And when he had stood a little while outside, he knocked at the door, and forthwith his fellow opened to him, and coming with his wallet behind his back and his stick in his hand, he went to the door of the room in which the friars were eating like a pilgrim and a pauper, and called out, saying, "For the love of the Lord God, give an alms to this poor and infirm pilgrim." But the Minister and the other friars knew him straightway. And the Minister answered him, "Brother, we also be poor, and since we be many, the alms we have be necessary to us. But for

the love of that Lord Whom you have named, enter the house, and we will give you of the alms which the Lord hath given to us." And when he had entered and stood before the table of the friars, the Minister gave him the platter in which he was eating, and bread likewise. And humbly accepting it he sat down next the fire in the presence of the friars sitting at the table. And sighing, he said to the friars, "When I saw the table worshipfully and sumptuously laid out, I thought within myself it was not the table of poor religious who daily go from door to door for alms. For it becomes us, dearest, more than other religious to follow the example of the humility and poverty of Christ, because we are professed and called to this before God and men. Whence it seems that I now sit as a Friar Minor, for the feasts of the Lord and of other saints are rather honoured with the want and poverty by which those saints conquered heaven for themselves, than with the elegance and superfluity by which they be made distant from heaven." But the friars were ashamed., considering he was speaking the pure truth. And some of them began to weep greatly, seeing how he was sitting on the earth, and that he would correct and instruct them in so holy and pure a wise. For he admonished the friars that they should have such humble and decent tables that by them the worldly might be edified. And if any poor man should come and be invited by the friars that he might sit as an equal beside them, and not the poor man on the earth, and the friars on high.

CHAPTER XXI

HOW MY LORD OF OSTIA WEPT AND WAS EDIFIED AT THE POVERTY OF THE FRIARS

My Lord of Ostia, who was afterwards Pope Gregory, when he had come to the chapter of the friars of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, entered the house to see the dormitory of the

friars, with many knights and clerks. And seeing that the friars used to lie on the earth, and had nothing under them except a little straw and some pallets as if all broken, and no pillows, he began to weep sore before them all, saying, "Behold, here sleep the friars, but we wretched ones, how many superfluities do we use! What therefore shall happen to us?" Whence he and all others were much edified. Also he saw no table there, for that in that dwelling the friars were accustomed to eat on the earth.

CHAPTER XXII

HOW THE MEN-AT-ARMS WENT SEEKING ALMS FROM DOOR TO DOOR ACCORDING TO THE COUNSEL OF BLESSED FRANCIS

When blessed Francis was in the dwelling of Bagni, over the city of Nocera, his feet began to swell sore by reason of his ailment of dropsy; and sore sick was he there. Which, when they of Assisi had heard, certain men-at-arms came to that place to bring him back to Assisi, fearing lest he should die there, and that others should have his most holy body.

But while they were bringing him home, they rested in a certain fortified place of the lordship of Assisi, to break their fast, and the blessed Father rested in the house of a certain poor man, who willingly received him. But the soldiers went through the place to buy themselves necessaries, and found none. And they returned to blessed Francis, saying to him as if making pastime, "You, Brother, must give us of your alms, since we can get nothing to eat." And blessed Francis said to them with great fervour of spirit, "You have not found, because you confided in your fly-gods and pence, and not in God. But return now to the houses whither you went seeking to buy, and laying aside your shame, ask alms there for the love of the Lord God; and the Holy Spirit inspiring them,

they shall give to you abundantly." They went therefore and sought alms as the blessed Father said to them, and those from whom they sought alms gave to them joyfully and with abundance of the things which they had. And knowing this to have happened to them as by a miracle, the soldiers praising God returned with great joy to blessed Francis.

Thus verily the blessed Father held it for great nobility and dignity before God and the world, to seek alms for the love of the Lord God; because all things which the Father of Heaven had created for the use of man on account of His beloved Son are granted freely to the worthy and the unworthy alike by charity since their sin. For he was wont to say that the servant of God ought more willingly and joyfully to seek alms for the love of the Lord God, than he who of his own bounty and courtesy should go, saying, "Whoever shall give to me a coin worth one single penny, I will give to them one thousand marks of gold." "For the servant of God when seeking an alms offers the love of God to those from whom he begs, in comparison with which reward all things which are in heaven and in earth are nothing." Whence before the friars were multiplied, and even after they were multiplied, when they went through the world preaching and were invited by any one, however noble and rich, to eat and guest with them, always at the hour of eating they were accustomed to go for alms before they would go to his house, on account of the good example of the brethren and the dignity of the Lady Poverty. And many times he who had invited him would say to him that he ought not to go, to whom he answered, "I will not put off my royal dignity and heirship, and my profession and that of my brethren, namely, to go for alms from door to door." And sometimes he who had invited him used to go with him himself, and took to him the alms which blessed Francis obtained, and on account of his devotion kept them for relics. He who has

written this saw this many-times, and bears testimony concerning these things.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW HE WENT BEGGING BEFORE HE WOULD GO IN TO THE TABLE OF THE CARDINAL

On a certain time when the blessed Father had visited my Lord of Ostia (who was afterwards Pope Gregory), at the hour of meals he went as if by stealth for alms from door to door. And when he had returned, my Lord of Ostia had already gone in to table with many knights and nobles. But blessed Francis approaching placed those alms which he had received on the table beside him, for he would that the blessed Father should always sit near him. And the Cardinal was a little ashamed because he went for alms and put them on the table, but he said nothing to him then on account of his guests. And when blessed Francis had eaten a little, he took of his alms and sent a little to each of the knights and chaplains of my Lord Cardinal on behalf of the Lord God. Who all received them with great joy and devotion, stretching out to him cowls and sleeves. And some did eat while others put it aside, out of their great devotion to him. But my Lord of Ostia rejoiced greatly at their devotion, chiefly because those alms were not of wheaten bread. After the meal he entered his chamber, taking with him blessed Francis, and lifting up his arms he embraced him with great joy and exultation, saying to him, "Why, my most simple brother, have you done me this shame today, that coming to my house, which is the home of your brethren, you should go begging alms?" The blessed Father answered him, "Nay, my Lord, I have done you great honour, for when a servant does his duty and fulfills his obedience to his lord, he does honour to his lord." And he said, "It behooves me to be a form and example to my poor ones, especially because I

know that in this order of friars there will be Friars Minor in name and in deed, who for the love of the Lord God and the unction of the Holy Spirit Who shall teach them concerning all things, shall be humiliated to all humility and subjection and service of their brethren. But there are, and will be, some among them who, held back by shame or evil usage, disdain and will disdain to humiliate themselves and to stoop to go begging alms and to do other servile work; wherefore it behooves me by my deeds to teach those who are and will be in the Order, that they shall be without excuse in this life and the next before God. Being therefore with you, who are our lord and our apostle, and with other magnates and rich men of the world, who for the love of the Lord God not only receive me with much devotion into your houses, but also compel me to sit at your table, I will not be ashamed to beg alms, nay, I would fain have and hold this a very great nobility and royal dignity before God, and in honour of Him Who, when He was Lord of all, wished for our sakes to become servant of all, and when He was rich and glorious in His majesty became poor and despised in our humility. Whence let those who are and shall be friars know that I hold it for greater consolation of soul and body to sit at the sorry table of the friars, and see before me the wretched alms which they beg from door to door for the love of the Lord God, than to sit at your table, or that of other lords, abundantly prepared with diverse dainties. For the bread of charity is holy bread, which the praise and love of the Lord God sanctifies, since when a brother ask an alms he should first say, 'Praised and blessed be the Lord God,' afterwards he should say, 'Do to us an alms for the love of the Lord God.'" And the Cardinal was much edified at this conversation of the blessed Father, and said to him, "My son, do that which is good in thine eyes, since God is with you, and you with Him." For this was the oft-repeated desire of blessed Francis, that a friar ought not to remain long without going out for alms, both on account of the great merit of the

act and lest he should afterwards be ashamed to go. Nay, the more noble and great in this world was the friar, so much the more was he rejoiced and edified with him, when he went to seek alms and did other servile work, as at that time the friars were wont to do.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF THE FRIAR WHO NEITHER USED TO PRAY NOR WORK, BUT WHO ATE WELL

In the first days of the Order, when the friars dwelt at Rivo Torto near Assisi, there was among them a certain friar who prayed little and did not work, who would not ask for alms and used to eat well. Considering these things, blessed Francis knew by the Holy Spirit that he was a carnal man, and said to him, "Go your way, friar fly, since you wilt eat of the labour of your brethren and be idle in the work of God, like a lazy and sterile drone which profiteth nothing and laboureth not, but eateth the labour and profit of the good bees." And so he went his way. And because he was carnal, he sought not for mercy nor found it.

CHAPTER XXV

HOW HE WENT OUT WITH FERVOUR TO MEET A POOR MAN WHO WENT AWAY WITH HIS ALMS THANKING GOD

On another time also, when the blessed Father was at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, a certain very spiritual poor man was coming through the street returning from Assisi with alms, and went along praising God in a loud voice with much joyfulness. But when he drew near the church of blessed Mary, blessed Francis heard him, and straightway with great fervour and joy went out to him, running up to him in the way, and with great joyfulness kissing the shoulder whereon he carried the scrip with alms. And he

took the wallet from his shoulder and put it on his own shoulder, and thus brought it into the house of the friars, and in their presence said, "Thus I would that a brother of mine should go and return with alms, glad and joyful and praising God."

CHAPTER XXVI

HOW IT WAS REVEALED BY THE LORD THAT THEY SHOULD BE CALLED FRIARS MINOR TO ANNOUNCE PEACE AND SALVATION

On a certain day blessed Francis said, "The order and life of the Friars Minor is a certain little flock which the Son of God in these last times asked of His Heavenly Father, saying, 'Father, I would that You should make and give to Me a new and humble folk in these last times, unlike to all others who have gone before them, in humility and poverty, and content to possess Me alone.' And the Father said, having heard the Son, 'My Son, that which You have asked is done.'" Whence the blessed Father used to say that for this reason God willed and revealed to him that they should be called Friars Minor, because this is that poor and humble folk which the Son of God demanded of His Father. Of which folk the Son Himself speaks in the Gospel, Fear not, little Hock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. And again, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. And the Lord understood this of all spiritual poor men, yet He spake it more especially of the Order of Friars Minor, which was to be in His Church. Whence, as it was revealed to blessed Francis that it should be called the Order of Friars Minor, so he made it to be written in his testament and the first Rule which he took to the Lord Pope, Innocent III, who approved and conceded it, and afterwards announced it to all in Consistory. Likewise the Lord revealed to him the salutation

which the friars should use, as he caused to be written in his testament, saying, "The Lord revealed to me that I should say for a greeting: The Lord give you peace." Whence, in the first days of the Order, when he would go with a certain friar who was one of the first twelve, he saluted the men and women on the road, and those who were in the fields, saying, "The Lord give you peace." And for that men had not heard up to then such a salutation from any religious they wondered greatly. Nay, some used to say to them with great indignation, "What does this salutation of yours mean?" So that that brother began to be ashamed of it, whence he said to blessed Francis, "Let me use another greeting." And the holy Father said to him, "Let them talk, since they perceive not those things which are of God. But be not ashamed, because from henceforth the nobles and princes of this world shall show reverence to you and other friars for this salutation. For it is no great thing if the Lord should wish to have a new and little flock, singular and unlike all those who have come before them in life and work, a folk which should be content to have Him alone most sweet."

SECTION III

OF CHARITY AND COMPASSION AND YIELDING TO ONE'S NEIGHBOUR

CHAPTER XXVII

AND FIRSTLY, HOW HE CONDESCENDED TO A BROTHER WHO WAS DYING OF HUNGER, BY EATING WITH HIM, ADMONISHING THE BRETHREN THAT THEY SHOULD DO PENANCE DISCREETLY

On a certain time when blessed Francis began to have friars, dwelling with them at Rivo Torto near Assisi, it fell on a night, all the friars being at rest, about the middle of the

night, one of them called out, saying, "I am dying! I am dying!" whereon all the friars woke up amazed and affrighted. And the holy Father, rising, said, "Rise, brothers, and kindle the light!" And when it was lit he said, "Who is he that said, 'I am dying'?" The brother answered, "It is I." And he said to him, "What is the matter, brother? How dost you die?" And he said, "I die of hunger." Then the blessed Father caused the table to be laid straightway, and like a man full of charity and discretion, ate with him lest he should be put to shame by eating alone, and by his will, all the other friars ate likewise. For that brother and all the other friars who had newly turned to the Lord, used to inflict their bodies even beyond measure. And after the meal the holy Father said to the other friars, "Dearest, I bid you, each of you, consider his nature, because though one of you may be able to sustain himself on less food, yet I will that another who requires more food shall not be bound to imitate the first in this thing, but shall, considering his own nature, give his body what it requires, so that it may be able to serve the spirit. For as we are bound to beware of superfluity of eating, which harms body and soul, so also must we beware of too great abstinence, nay, even more, since the Lord will have mercy and not sacrifice." And he said, "Dearest brothers, this which I have done, to wit, that on account of charity towards my brother, we have eaten together with him, lest he should be ashamed to eat alone, necessity and charity rather forced me to do. But I say to you that I would not so do again, seeing it would be neither religious nor becoming. But I will and command you that each of our brethren according to our poverty satisfy his body as it shall be necessary for him." For the first friars, and the others who came after them for a long time, afflicted their bodies beyond measure with abstinence from food and drink, with vigils, with cold, with roughness of raiment, and the labour of their hands; they wore next their flesh very strong iron belts and coats, and hair shirts; on which account, seeing by occasion of this the

friars might become weak, and that some were already in that short time ill, he forbade in a certain chapter any friar to wear anything next the skin except a tunic.

But we who were with him bear testimony of him, that though in the whole time of his life he was thus discreet and temperate concerning his brethren, yet it was so that they should at no time deviate from the way of poverty and the decorum of our Order. Nevertheless the most holy Father himself, from the beginning of his conversion unto the end of his life, was austere to his own body, although he was by nature feeble, and could not have lived in the world, except delicately. Whence, considering on a certain day, that the friars were exceeding the measure of poverty and of decency in their food and in other things, in a certain sermon which he made to sundry brethren, in the presence of all the friars he said, "Let not the brethren think that some allowance is necessary to my body, for because it behooves me to be the form and example of all friars, I wish to use and be content with few and very wretched meats, and to use all other things according to poverty, and utterly to turn in disgust from things rare and delicate."

CHAPTER XXVIII

HOW HE CONDESCENDED TO A SICK FRIAR BY EATING GRAPES WITH HIM

On another time when the blessed Father was at the same place, a certain friar, spiritual and old in the Order, was there infirm and very feeble. And when he saw him blessed Francis was moved with pity for him. But because then the friars, both well and ill, with great joy were using poverty for their abundance, and not using in their sickness medicines nor even asking for them, but on the other hand taking by choice those things which were contrary to the body,

blessed Francis said within himself, "If that brother would eat some ripe grapes early in the morning I believe it would do him good." And as he thought so he did in its turn.

For he rose on a certain day, very early, and called to him that friar privately, and led him into a certain vineyard which was near the dwelling. And he chose a vine whereon the grape? were good to eat, and sitting near the vine with that friar, began to eat of the grapes, lest the brother himself should be ashamed to eat alone. And while they were eating, the friar was cured, and together they praised the Lord. Whence that friar for the whole time of his life, remembered this the mercy and piety which the most holy Father showed and did unto him, and often with great devotion and shedding of tears was wont to relate this among the brethren.

CHAPTER XXIX

HOW HE STRIPPED HIMSELF AND HIS FELLOW THAT HE MIGHT CLOTHE THE POOR

At Celano in the winter time, when blessed Francis had a cloth folded like a mantle which a certain friend of the friars had lent to him, there came to him an old woman seeking alms. Who forthwith loosed the cloak from his neck, and though it belonged to another, gave it to the poor old woman, saying, "Go and make a tunic for yourself, because you want it enough." The old woman laughed, and astonished, I know not whether from fear or joy, took the cloth from his hands, and lest delay should bring about a danger of his taking it back, ran very swiftly, and fell upon the cloth with her scissors. But when she found the cloth was not enough for a tunic, she came back to the first kindness of the holy Father, pointing out to him that the cloth was not large enough for a tunic. The saint turned his

eyes to his fellow who wore such another cloth on his back, and said to him, "Hear you what this poor woman says. For the love of God let us bear the cold, and give that cloth to the poor woman that her tunic may be finished." And forthwith as he had given it so also did his fellow. Thus both of them remained bare that the poor woman might be clothed.

CHAPTER XXX

HOW HE COUNTED IT THEFT NOT TO GIVE TO ONE WHOSE NEEDS WERE GREATER

Once when he was returning from Siena, he came across a poor man on the way, and said to his fellow, "We ought to return this mantle to its owner. For we received it only as a loan, until we should come upon one poorer than ourselves." But his fellow, considering the necessity of the holy Father, maintained that he ought not to neglect himself to provide for another. To whom the saint answered, "I will not be a thief. For it would be counted to us for a theft if we should not give to him who is more needy." And so the pious Father handed over the mantle to the poor man.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW HE GAVE A MANTLE TO A POOR MAN ON AN AGREEMENT

At the Cell of Cortona, the blessed Father was wearing a new mantle which the friars had been at some trouble to obtain for him. A poor man came to the dwelling, weeping for his dead wife and his wretched orphaned family. To whom the compassionate saint said, "I give you this mantle on condition that you will not give it up to any one except he buy it from you and pay you well." The friars, hearing this, ran together to the poor man to take away that mantle from

him. But the poor man, gathering boldness from the face of the holy Father, with clasped hands was carrying it away as his own. At last the friars redeemed the mantle, procuring that the due price should be given to the poor man.

CHAPTER XXXII

HOW A CERTAIN POOR MAN, BY VIRTUE OF THE ALMS OF BLESSED FRANCIS, FORGAVE HIS INJURIES AND HATE TO HIS LORD

At the hill of the lordship of Perugia, blessed Francis met a certain poor man whom he had known before in the world, and said to him, "Brother, how is it with thee?" But he with angry mind began to utter curses on his lord, saying, "By the grace of my lord, whom may the Lord curse, I can be nothing but ill, since he has taken away from me all my goods." But blessed Francis, seeing that he persisted in mortal hatred, having pity on his soul, said to him, "Brother, forgive your lord for the love of God, and free your own soul; it may be that he will restore what he has taken away; otherwise you have lost your goods and wilt lose your soul." And he said, "I cannot forgive him at all, unless he first return what he has taken away from me." Then the holy Father answered, "Behold, I give you this mantle; I beg you to forgive your lord for the love of the Lord God." And immediately his heart was sweetened, and moved by this good deed he forgave his lord his injuries.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HOW HE SENT A MANTLE TO A POOR WOMAN WHO SUFFERED FROM HER EYES LIKE HIMSELF

A certain poor woman of Machilone came to Rieti for a disease of the eyes; and when the doctor came to blessed Francis, he said to him, "Brother, a certain woman diseased

in the eyes has come to me, who is so poor that I have had to pay her charges for her." And when he had heard this, he was forthwith moved with pity for her, and calling one of the friars who was his Warden, he said to him, "Brother Warden, we must return what we borrowed." Who answered, "What is that loan, brother?" But he said, "This mantle which we have received as a loan from that poor sick woman, we should return to her." And his Warden said to him, "Brother, what seemeth best to you to be done, so do." Then the holy Father called with glee a certain spiritual man familiar with him, and said to him, "Take this mantle, and twelve loaves with it, and go to the poor woman sick of her eyes whom the doctor shall show you, and say to her, 'The poor man to whom you entrusted this mantle gives thanks to you for the loan of the mantle, take that which is thine own.'" He went therefore and said to the woman all the things that blessed Francis had said to him. But she, thinking he was making game of her, said to him with fear and modesty, "Leave me in peace, for I know not what you say est." But he put the mantle and the twelve loaves in her hands. She then, considering that he must have spoken this in truth, accepted it with fear and reverence, rejoicing and praising the Lord. And fearing lest it should be taken away from her, she rose secretly by night and returned to her home with gladness. But blessed Francis had arranged with the Warden to give her her charges every day while she abode there. Whence we who were with him bear testimony of him that he was of so much charity and pity to the sick and the whole, not only toward his brethren but also toward other poor folk, well or ill, that he used to give to the poor those necessaries of his body which the brethren used sometimes to acquire with great solicitude and labour, first soothing us lest we should be troubled by it, with great joy inward and outward, taking away those things from himself even which were very necessary to him. And on account of this thing the General Minister and his Warden had ordered him not to give his tunic to any friars without

their leave. For the friars of their devotion used sometimes to beg a tunic of him, who immediately gave it to them, and sometimes he divided it and gave them a part, and kept a part for himself, because he only carried one tunic.

CHAPTER XXXIV

HOW HE GAVE HIS TUNIC TO FRIARS WHO BEGGED IT FOR THE LOVE OF GOD

Whence on a time, when he was going through a certain province preaching, two French-born friars met him. Who when they had had great consolation from him, finally begged his tunic of him for the love of God. But he, when he heard "for the love of God" forthwith took off his tunic and gave it to them, remaining bare for some hours. For when the love of God was named to him, he never denied to any one his cord, or his tunic, or anything whatever that was asked for; nay, he greatly misliked it and often reproved the friars when he heard them for anything whatever name uselessly "for the love of God." For he was wont to say, "So very high and very precious is the love of God, that it should never be named save seldom and in great necessity, and with much reverence."

But one of those friars took off his own tunic, and gave it to him. When he gave a tunic or part of it to any one he suffered thence great necessity and tribulation, since he could not very quickly have another, especially because he always wished to wear a sorry tunic patched with pieces of cloth sometimes both within and without; nay, he would never or rarely wear a tunic of new cloth, but he used to get from another friar his tunic which he had already worn for some time, and sometimes he would take from one brother a part of his tunic and from another a part. But on account of his many infirmities and chills of the stomach and the

spleen, he used sometimes to patch it on the inside with new cloth. And this manner of poverty in his clothes he held and observed until the year in which he passed to the Lord; for a few days before his death, because he was dropsical, and as if all dried up, and on account of the many other infirmities which he had, the friars made for him several tunics, for that of necessity his tunic should be changed every day and night.

CHAPTER XXXV

HOW HE WISHED TO GIVE A PIECE OF CLOTH SECRETLY TO A POOR MAN

Another time a certain poor man came to the place where blessed Francis was, and begged a piece of cloth for the love of God. Hearing which, blessed Francis said to a certain friar, "Seek through the house if you canst find some cloth or any piece, and give it to that poor man." And that friar, running through the whole of the house, said that he could not find any. Then that the poor brother should not go away empty, blessed Francis went by stealth lest his Warden should forbid him, and took a knife, and sitting in his hiding-place, began to cut off that part of his tunic which was sewed on in the inside, wishing to give that piece to the poor man by stealth. But the Warden learning this, went forthwith to him, and forbade him to give it, especially because there was then a great frost, and he was very ill and cold. Then blessed Francis said to him, "If you wilt not that I should give that piece to him, you must arrange that some piece be given to that poor brother." And so the friars gave to that poor man some cloth from their own clothing, for the sake of blessed Francis. When he went through the world to preach, either on his feet or on an ass (after he began to grow sick), or on a horse in the greatest and strictest necessity (because otherwise he would not ride, and this only a little before his

death), if any brother used to lend him a mantle, he would not receive it unless he might give it to any poor man meeting him or coming to him, so only that the testimony of his spirit showed him that it was necessary to him.

CHAPTER XXXVI

HOW HE BADE BROTHER GILES CLOTHE A POOR MAN

In the first days of the Order, when he was staying at Rivo Torto, with the two companions whom he then had, alone, behold, a certain man, by name Giles, who was the third friar, came from the world to him, to receive his life. And after he abode there for some days clothed with the garments he had brought from the world, it happened that a certain poor man came to the place, seeking an alms from blessed Francis. Turning to Giles, blessed Francis said to him, "Give your mantle to your poor brother." Who forthwith with great joy took it from his back and gave it to the poor man. And then it was seen that God had put a new grace into his heart, for that he had given with joy his mantle to the poor. And so he was received by blessed Francis, and ever went forward virtuously to the greatest perfection.

CHAPTER XXXVII

OF THE PENANCE HE GAVE TO A FRIAR WHO MISJUDGED A POOR MAN

When blessed Francis had gone to preach at a certain dwelling of the friars near Rocca Brizzi, it happened that on that day on which he should preach a certain poor and infirm man came unto him. On whom having much compassion, he began to speak to his fellow of his poverty and sickness, and his fellow said to him, "Brother, it is true that he seems poor enough; but it may be that in the whole province there is no one who wishes more to be rich than

he." And being immediately severely reproved by blessed Francis, he confessed his fault. And blessed Francis said, "Wilt you for this do the penance which I shall bid thee?" Who answered, "I will do it willingly." And he said to him, "Go and put off your tunic, and throw yourself naked at the poor man's feet, and tell him how you have sinned against him in speaking evil in that matter, and ask him to pray for you." He went therefore and did all the things which blessed Francis had told him. Which done, he arose and put on his tunic and returned to blessed Francis. And blessed Francis said to him, "Wouldst you know how you have sinned against him, nay, against Christ? When you see a poor man, you ought to consider Him in Whose Name he comes namely, Christ. Who took our poverty and infirmity on Him: for the infirmity and poverty of this man, is as it were a mirror to us, wherein we may see and consider with pity, the sickness and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

HOW HE CAUSED A NEW TESTAMENT TO BE GIVEN TO THE MOTHER OF TWO FRIARS

Another time, when he was abiding at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, a certain woman, poor and old, who had two sons in the order, came to the dwelling seeking an alms from the holy Father. Immediately blessed Francis said to Friar Peter of Catana, who was then the Minister General, "Have we aught which we can give to this our mother?" (For he was wont to say that the mother of any friar was the mother of him and of all friars.) Friar Peter answered him, "We have nothing in the house which we can give her, for she would have an alms to sustain her body. But we have in the church one only New Testament wherein we read the lessons at Matins." (For in that time the friars had no breviaries nor many psalters.) Blessed Francis said to him therefore, "Give

the Testament to our mother, that she may sell it for her necessity. For I believe firmly that it will please the Lord and the Blessed Virgin more, than if we were to read in it." And so he gave it her. For that can be said and written of him, which is read of blessed Job: For from my youth {charity) was brought up with me . . . and from my mother's womb. Whence unto us who were with him not only what we have learned from others of his charity and pity toward friars and other poor men, but also those things which our eyes have seen would be very difficult to write or tell.

SECTION IV

OF THE PERFECTION OF HOLY HUMILITY AND OBEDIENCE IN HIMSELF AND HIS BRETHREN

CHAPTER XXXIX

AND FIRSTLY HOW HE RESIGNED THE OFFICE OF HIS PRELACY AND APPOINTED PETER OF CATANA GENERAL MINISTER

To observe the virtue of holy humility, a few years after his conversion he resigned the office of his prelacy in a certain Chapter before the friars, saying: "From henceforth am I dead to you, but behold Brother Peter of Catana, whom both I and we all will obey." And throwing himself on the earth before him, he promised him obedience and reverence. Thereupon all the friars wept, and their exceeding great grief forced from them deep sighs, when they saw themselves in a manner become orphans of such a father. But the holy Father rising, with his eyes raised to heaven and his hands joined, said, "Lord, I commend to You Your family which hitherto You have committed to me; and now on account of the infirmities which You know, most sweet Lord, being unable to have the care of it, I commend it to its

Ministers, who shall be held in the day of judgment to show cause before You, O Lord, if any brother should perish through their negligence, or evil example, or bitter correction."

He remained therefore from that time a subject unto the day of his death, bearing himself more humbly in all things than any of the others.

CHAPTER XL

HOW HE GAVE UP HIS FELLOWS, BEING UNWILLING TO HAVE A SPECIAL FELLOW

At another time he gave up all his fellows to his Vicar, saying, "I will not seem singular in this prerogative of liberty to have a special fellow, but let friars join me from place to place as the Lord shall have inspired them." And he added, "I saw just now a blind man who had but a puppy as a guide on his way, and I will not seem better than he." But this was always his glory, that having left behind him all appearance of singularity or boasting, there should dwell in him the virtue of Christ.

CHAPTER XLI

THAT HE RESIGNED OFFICE BY REASON OF EVIL PRELATES

Once having been asked by a certain friar, why he had thus cast off his brethren from his care, and handed them over into strange hands, as if they did not belong to him in the smallest degree, he answered, "My son, I love the brethren as I am able, but if they would follow in my footsteps, I would love them still more, nor would I make myself strange to them. For there are certain of the prelates, who draw them to other things, proposing to them the example of the ancients, and little considering my warnings. But what and

how they do shall appear more clearly in the end." And a little after, when his exceeding great infirmity weighed upon him, in the vehemence of his spirit he rose in his bed, and crying out, said, "Who are they who snatch my Order and my brethren from my hands? If I come to the General Chapter, I will show them what will they have."

CHAPTER XLII

THAT HE HUMBLY ACQUIRED MEAT FOR THE INFIRM, AND WARNED THEM TO BE PATIENT

The blessed Father was not ashamed to obtain flesh meat for a sick friar in the public places of the cities, yet he warned them that lay sick to bear want patiently, and not to rise in scandal when they were not fully satisfied. Whence in the first Rule he caused it to be written thus, "I beseech my brethren that in their infirmities they grow not angry, nor be disturbed against God or their brethren, nor demand medicines too eagerly, nor desire too greatly to set free the flesh that so soon shall die, which is the enemy of the spirit. But let them give thanks for all things, and desire to be such as God would have them to be. For those, whom the Lord hath preordained to life eternal, He teaches with the stings of scourges and infirmities, as He Himself says, As many as I love, I rebuke and chaveen."

CHAPTER XLIII

OF THE HUMBLE ANSWER OF BLESSED FRANCIS AND DOMINIC WHEN THEY WERE ASKED AT THE SAME TIME BY THE CARDINALS, WHETHER THEY WOULD THAT THEIR BRETHREN SHOULD BE PRELATES OF THE CHURCH

In the city of Rome when those two renowned lights, blessed Francis and blessed Dominic, were together before my Lord of Ostia, who was afterwards Pope, and each in turn had

poured forth sweet things concerning God, then my Lord of Ostia said to them, "In the primitive church the pastors and prelates were poor, and men fervent in charity, not greed. Why therefore should we not make bishops and prelates of your friars, who should prevail over all others for a document and example?" Then was there between the saints a humble and devout contention concerning their answer, not indeed a pushing forward, but each in turn turning to the other, and forcing him to answer. Eut at the last the humility of Francis conquered, so that he did not answer first, and Dominic conquered, who by answering first did humbly obey. Blessed Dominic therefore answering said, "My Lord, my brethren have been exalted to a good condition if they will but know it, and, as far as lies in my power, I shall never permit them to attain any form of dignity." Then blessed Francis, inclining himself before the aforesaid Lord, said, "My Lord, my brethren be called Minors for this reason, that they should not presume to become greater. For their vocation teaches them to remain lowly, and to imitate the footsteps of the humility of Christ, that hereby at last they may be exalted more than others in the sight of the saints. For if you would that they bring forth fruit in the Church of God, hold and keep them in the state of their calling, and if they strive for high things, cast them down violently to the ground, and never permit them to rise to any prelacy." These were the answers of the saints. And when they were ended, my Lord of Ostia, much edified by the responses of them both, gave exceeding great thanks to God. Both going away together, blessed Dominic asked blessed Francis to deign to give him the cord by which he was girded. And blessed Francis denied it him from humility, as he had demanded it from charity. Yet the happy devotion of him who asked did conquer, and blessed Dominic, having received the cord of blessed Francis by the violence of his charity, girded it under his tunic, and from that time forth devoutly wore it. Then either of them placed his hands between the hands of the other, and

commended each to the other with the sweetest mutual commendations. And so holy Dominic said to holy Francis, "I would, brother Francis, that thine and mine should make one Order, and that we should live in like manner in the church." Then when they were separated from one another, Dominic said to several who were standing by, "In truth I say unto you, that all religious ought to imitate this holy man Francis, so great is the perfection of his holiness."

CHAPTER XLIV

THAT AS A FOUNDATION OF HUMILITY, HE WILLED HIS FRIARS TO SERVE THE LEPERS

Blessed Francis, from the beginning of his conversion, the Lord aiding him, founded himself like a wise builder upon the rock, that is, on the exceeding great humility and poverty of the Son of God, calling his Order that of the Friars Minor by cause of his great humility. Whence in the beginning of the Order he wished that the friars should abide in leper houses to serve them, and there lay a foundation of holy humility. For when gentle and simple came to the Order, among the other things which were announced to them, he was wont to say that it behooved them to serve lepers, and abide in their houses; as it was contained in the first Rule, "Willing to have naught under heaven except holy poverty, whereby they may be fed by the Lord in this world with bodily and spiritual food, and in the life to come attain their heavenly heritage." And thus he chose for himself and others a foundation on the greatest humility and poverty, inasmuch as when he might have been a great prelate in the Church of God, he chose and wished to be lowly, not only in the Church, but also among his brethren. For this lowliness, in his opinion and desire, was very great exaltation in the sight of God and man.

CHAPTER XLV

THAT HE WISHED THE GLORY AND HONOUR OF ALL HIS GOOD WORKS AND DEEDS TO BE GIVEN TO GOD ALONE

When he had been preaching to the people in Rieti in the market place of the city, after the preaching was finished, the bishop of that city straightway rose up, a man both discreet and spiritual, and said to the people, "The Lord, from the first day in which He planted and built up His church, has always adorned it with holy men, to nourish it by word and example. But now, in this latest hour, He has adorned it with this poor and despised and unlettered man, Francis, and therefore are we bound to love and honour the Lord, and beware of sin. For he hath not done after this manner to any nation." Having finished these words, the bishop came down from the place where he had preached, and entered the Cathedral. And blessed Francis coming to him, throwing himself at his feet, bowed down before him, and said, "In truth I say unto you, my Lord Bishop, that no man has done so much honour to me in this life, as you have done to me today, for those men say, 'This is a holy man,' attributing to me glory and sanctity, and not to the Creator. But you, as one discreet, have separated the precious from the vile."

For when the holy Father used to be praised and called holy, he was wont to answer to such speeches, saying, "I am not yet so secure, that I ought not to have sons and daughters. For at whatever hour the Lord should take away from me the treasure which He has commended to me, what else would remain to me but body and soul, which even infidels have? Nay, I ought to believe that if the Lord should have granted so many and so great gifts to a thief or an infidel as to me they would have been more faithful to their Lord than I. For, as in the picture of the Lord and the Blessed Virgin painted

on wood, the Lord and the Blessed Virgin are honoured, and yet the wood and the picture take nothing of it to themselves, so the servant of God is in a manner a picture of God, wherein God is honoured on account of His goodness. But he ought to take nothing of this to himself, since in respect of God, he is less than the wood and the picture, nay, he is pure nothing. And therefore unto God alone must the glory and honour be rendered, but unto him only shame and tribulation while he lives among the miseries of this life."

CHAPTER XLVI

HOW UP TO HIS DEATH HE WOULD FAIN HAVE A WARDEN AND LIVE IN SUBJECTION

But wishing to remain in perfect humility and subjection unto death; some time before his death he said to the Minister-General, "I would that you should commit your rule over me to one of my fellows, to whom I may do obedience in your place, for on account of the merit of obedience I desire that in life and in death it should ever remain with me." And from that time forward he had one of his fellows as a Warden, whom he obeyed in the stead of the Minister-General, nay, on a time he said to his fellows, "The Lord has granted me this grace among others, to obey as diligently the novice who enters the Order today, if he were assigned to me for Warden, as he who is foremost and ancient in life and in the Order. For a subject ought to look upon his superior, not as a man, but as that God for Whose love he is subject to him." Afterwards he said, "There is no prelate in the whole world who is so much feared as the Lord would make me to be feared, if so I wished it, by my brethren. But the Lord has granted me this grace, that I wish to be content with all, as he that is least in the Order." This also we have seen with our eyes who were with him, as also he himself

testified, that when certain of the friars did not satisfy him in his necessities, or said to him some word by which a man is wont to be disturbed, straightway he went to prayer, and on his return he would remember nothing, nor ever said, "Such an one did not satisfy me," or, "Such an one said to me such a word." And thus persevering in this wise, by so much the more as he drew near to death was he solicitous to consider how he might live and die in all humility and poverty, and in all perfection of virtues.

CHAPTER XLVII

OF THE PERFECT MANNER OF OBEYING WHICH HE TAUGHT

The most holy Father was wont to say to his brethren, "Brothers most dear, fulfil a command at the first word, nor wait till what was said to you is repeated. Do not argue or judge, for there is no impossibility in the command, for even if I were to order you aught above your strength, holy obedience will not be wanting to aid your weakness."

CHAPTER XLVIII

HOW HE LIKENED PERFECT OBEDIENCE, IN A PARABLE, TO THE BODY OF A DEAD MAN

But on a time before his fellows he uttered this sigh, "Hardly is there one Religious in the world who obeys his superior well." Immediately his fellows said to him, "Tell us, Father, what is the perfect and highest obedience?" But he answering, described true and perfect obedience under the figure of a dead body, thus, "Take a lifeless body and put it where it shall please you, you will see that it will not resist moving, nor change its place, nor claim dismissal. But if it be exalted on a throne, it looks not on high things but low. If it be lapped in purple, it grows doubly pale. He therefore is truly obedient who judges not why he is moved, takes no

thought where he is placed, and asks not that he should be moved; promoted to office he keeps his unwonted humility, while the more he is honoured, the more he reputes himself unworthy."

Things ordered purely and simply, not asked of him, he called holy obediences. But he believed that the highest obedience, that in which flesh and blood had no part, was when men should go by divine inspiration among the infidels, either for the good of their fellows, or for the desire of martyrdom, and he judged that to seek this was right acceptable.

CHAPTER XLIX

THAT IT IS DANGEROUS TO ORDER TOO LIGHTLY BY OBEDIENCE, OR NOT TO OBEY AN ORDER

And so the blessed Father thought that an order should be given by virtue of obedience seldom, nor should that weapon be used first which should be the last; for said he, "The hand should not be laid readily on the sword." But he was wont to say that he who did not immediately obey the precept of obedience, neither feared God nor revered man (so long, namely, as there was no necessary cause for delay). Nor is there anything more true, for what else is the power of command in a rash governor than a sword in the hand of a wrathful man? But who more hopeless than the Religious who neglects and contemns obedience?

CHAPTER L

HOW HE ANSWERED THE FRIARS PERSUADING HIM TO SEEK THE PRIVILEGE OF PREACHING FREELY

Certain friars said to blessed Francis, "Father, dost you not see that sometimes the bishops will not permit us to preach,

and make us stand idle many days in one place before we can announce the word of the Lord. It were better that you should obtain from the Lord Pope a privilege concerning this matter, as it would be for the salvation of souls." To whom he answered with sore rebuke, saying, "You, Friars Minor, know not the will of God, and do not allow me to convert the whole world as God wills. For I wish by perfect humility and reverence first to convert the prelates. Who, when they shall see our holy life and humble reverence towards them, shall beseech you to preach and convert the people, and they shall call them to the preaching better than your privileges which would lead you into pride. And if you be separated from all avarice, and persuade the people to give to the churches their due, they themselves would ask you to hear the confession of their flock, though of this you need not take heed, for if these were converted they should well find confessors. But as for me, I desire this privilege from the Lord, that never may I have any privilege from man, except to do reverence to all, and to convert the world by obedience to the holy Rule rather by example than by word."

CHAPTER LI

OF THE MANNER IN RECONCILING ONE ANOTHER WHEN ONE OFFENDED ANOTHER

He was wont to affirm that the Friars Minor had been sent by the Lord in these last times, that they might show examples to those bound up in the darkness of sinners. He was wont to say that he was filled with the sweetest odours and anointed with the virtue of precious ointment, when he heard great things of the holy friars dispersed through the world. It fell on a day that a certain friar, in the presence of a nobleman of the Island of Cyprus, reproached another, but when he perceived that his brother was somewhat disturbed thereby, being wrathful with himself, he straightway took the dung of

an ass and put it in his own mouth, breaking it small with his teeth, saying, "Eat dung, O tongue, which poured out the venom of wrath on my brother." But he who beheld these things, being astonished to stupor, went his way much edified, and from that time forth submitted himself and all he had to the will of the friars. And this custom all the friars observed that if one of them should have uttered a word of injury or trouble to another, having thrown himself prostrate upon the earth, he kissed the foot of his angered brother straight-way, and humbly asked forgiveness. The holy Father was rejoiced in such things when he heard that his sons had drawn examples of holiness for themselves from him, and he loaded those friars with most worthy benedictions of all acceptation, who by word or work should lead sinners to the love of Christ. For in the zeal of souls wherewith he himself was perfectly filled, he wished his sons to resemble him with a perfect similitude.

CHAPTER LII

HOW CHRIST COMPLAINED TO BROTHER LEO, OF THE INGRATITUDE AND PRIDE OF THE FRIARS

On a certain time the Lord Jesus Christ said to Brother Leo, the fellow of blessed Francis, "Brother Leo, I lament for the friars." To Whom answered Brother Leo, "Wherefore, O Lord?" And the Lord answered, "For three things: namely, because they do not recognise My benefits which so largely and abundantly I shower on them, as you knowest; while they sow not neither do they reap. And because the whole day they murmur, and are idle. And for that they provoke each other often to anger, and do not return to love, and do not forgive the injury they receive,"

CHAPTER LIII

HOW HE ANSWERED HUMBLY AND TRULY TO A CERTAIN DOCTOR OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS WHO QUESTIONED HIM CONCERNING THE WORDS OF SCRIPTURE

But while he was abiding at Siena, there came to him a certain doctor of divinity of the Order of Preachers, a man both humble and right spiritual. When he had discussed with blessed Francis for some time together the words of the Lord, the said master asked of him concerning that word of Ezekiel: If you speak not to warn the wicked from his wicked ways, his blood will I require at thine hand. For he said, "I know many, however, good Father, that be in mortal sin, to whom I do not speak to warn them of their impiety, will their souls therefore be required at my hands?" To whom blessed Francis humbly said that he was a simpleton, and that therefore he should rather be taught of him than answer concerning the meaning of Scripture. Then that humble master added, "Brother, though I have heard an exposition of this text from sundry wise men, yet would I willingly learn your understanding of it." Therefore blessed Francis said, "If the text is to be understood generally, I take it thus, that the servant of God should so burn and shine forth by life and holiness in himself, that by the light of his example and by the speech of his holy conversation he should reprove all the impious. Thus, say I, his splendour and the odour of his fame will announce to all their iniquities." And so that doctor, going away much edified, said to the fellows of the blessed Father, "My brethren, the theology of this man, founded on purity and contemplation, is a flying eagle, while our science crawls on its belly on the earth."

CHAPTER LIV

OF HUMILITY AND PEACE WITH THE SECULAR CLERGY

Blessed Francis would that his sons should have peace with all men, and hold themselves lowly to all. Yet he taught them by word and showed them by example to be chiefly humble to the clergy. For he was wont to say, "We have been sent in aid of the clergy for the salvation of souls, and that whatsoever is found wanting in them may be supplied by us, but each will receive his reward, not according to his authority, but according to his labour. Learn, brethren, that the gain of souls is most pleasing to God, and this we can better obtain when in peace, than in discord with the clergy. But if these hinder the welfare of the people, revenge is of God, and He will reward them in His time. And therefore be ye subject to superiors, nor let any evil emulation arise from you. For if you shall have been sons of peace, you will gain clergy and people, and this is more acceptable to God, than to gain the people alone with a scandalised clergy. Cover," he said, "their lapses and supply their manifold defects, then when ye have done this, be the more humble."

CHAPTER LV

HOW HE HUMBLY ACQUIRED THE CHURCH OF SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS FROM THE ABBOT OF SAINT BENEDICT, AND HOW HE WISHED HIS BRETHREN TO DWELL THERE AND LIVE HUMBLY

Blessed Francis, seeing that the Lord wished to multiply the number of his friars, said to them, "Dearest brethren and my little sons, I see that the Lord wills to multiply us, whence it seems good and religious to me that we should obtain either from the canons of Saint Rufinus, or from the Abbot of Saint Benedict some church where the friars may say their Hours, and only have near it some small sorry hut constructed from mud and branches, where the brethren may rest and work. For this place is not fitting nor sufficient to the friars, since the Lord wishes to multiply them, and especially since we

have here no church wherein the friars may say their Hours. And if any friar should die, it would not be fitting to bury him here, nor in a church of the secular clergy." And this speech pleased all the friars.

He went therefore to the Bishop of Assisi, and laid the aforesaid request before him. Unto whom said the Bishop, "Brother, I have no church which I can give you," and the canons also answered the same. Then he went to the Abbot of Saint Benedict of Monte Subasio, and laid the same proposition before him. But the Abbot, moved with piety, having taken counsel with his monks, the divine grace and will operating, conceded to blessed Francis and to his friars the church of Blessed Mary of Portiuncula, as the smallest and the poorest church they had. And the Abbot said to blessed Francis, "Behold, brother, we have granted what you have asked. But if the Lord shall multiply this congregation, we would that this place should be the chief of all your dwellings." And the speech pleased blessed Francis and his brethren, and the blessed Father rejoiced greatly concerning the place conceded to the friars, especially on account of the name of the church, of the Mother of Christ, and because it was so small and poor a church, and also because it was named the Portiuncula, in which it was prefigured that it should be the head and the mother of the poor Friars Minor. For the Church was called the Portiuncula, because of that court which was formerly called "the little portion." Whence the blessed Father was wont to say, "The Lord wished that no other church should be conceded to the friars, and that the first friars should not as then build a new church nor have any other except that, since by this, through the advent of the Friars Minor, a certain prophecy was fulfilled." And though it was poor and now destroyed, yet for a great time the men of the city of Assisi and of all its lordship had had great devotion to that church, and they have a greater today, and daily doth it wax. Whence as the brethren went

there to dwell, forthwith the Lord multiplied their number almost daily, and the odour of their fame was wonderfully scattered through all the valley of Spoleto, and many parts of the land. Yet of old it was called Saint Mary of the Angels because, as it was said, the songs of Angels and of celestial spirits were there heard of those coming to the place.

(But now, because the friars are colder in prayer and virtuous works and more lax and idle, and given to uttering idle words and the news of this world, than they were used, that place itself is not held in so great reverence and devotion, as heretofore it has been of custom, and as I would wish it to be.)

When the blessed Father had said these words, forthwith with great fervour he concluded, saying, "I would that this place should always be immediately under the power of the Minister-General and servant, for the reason that he should have greater care and solicitude in providing there a good and holy family. Let clerks be chosen among the better and more holy and more fitting friars, those of the whole Order who can best say the Office, that not only lay folk but also the other friars may willingly and with great devotion see and hear them. But of the lay brothers, let holy men discreet and humble and decent be chosen, who may serve them. I will also that no woman and no friar enter that place except the General Minister and the friars who serve them. And they shall not speak with any person, except with the friars who serve them and with the Minister who shall visit them. I will, likewise, that the lay brothers themselves who serve them, be bound never to say to them idle words or this world's news, or anything not useful to their souls. And on account of this, I especially will that no one shall enter into the dwelling, that they the better preserve its purity and sanctity, and that in that place nothing be said or done uselessly, but the whole place itself be preserved pure and

holy in hymns and the praises of the Lord. And when any of those friars shall have passed away to the Lord, I will that in his place another holy friar, wherever he may be, be sent thither by the Minister-General. For if the other friars shall have fallen off somewhat from purity and honesty, I will that this place be blessed, and that it remain for ever a mirror and a good example of the whole Order, and like a candlestick before the throne of God and the blessed Virgin, always burning and shining. On account of which the Lord will have mercy on the defects and faults of all friars, and always preserve and protect this Order and this His tender plant."

CHAPTER LVI

OF THE HUMBLE REVERENCE WHICH HE SHOWED CONCERNING THE SWEEPING AND CLEANING OF CHURCHES

On a time when he was staying at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, and there were as yet but few friars, blessed Francis went by those villages and churches in the neighbourhood of Assisi announcing and preaching to men that they should do penance, and he carried a broom to sweep out unclean churches. For the holy Father grieved much when he saw any church not so clean as he wished. And therefore, when the preaching was finished, he always made all the priests who were there gather together in some remote place, lest he should be overheard by the lay folk, and preached to them of the salvation of souls, and especially that they should be careful to keep clean the churches and altars, and all things which pertained to the celebration of the divine mysteries.

CHAPTER LVII

OF THE RUSTIC WHO FOUND HIM SWEEPING A CHURCH, AND BEING CONVERTED ENTERED THE ORDER, AND WAS A SAINTLY FRIAR

But when he had gone to a certain village belonging to the city of Assisi, he began to sweep it and clean it. And immediately a rumour of him went through the whole village, for he was gladly seen of those men and more willingly heard. But when a certain rustic of strange simplicity, who was ploughing in his field, John by name, heard this he went straightway to him and found him sweeping the church humbly and devoutly. And he said to him, "Brother, give me the broom, for I wish to help you." And taking the broom from his hands he swept out the remainder. And while they were sitting together he said to blessed Francis, "Brother, it is now a long time that I have had the will to serve God, and especially after I have heard the rumour of you and your brethren, but I knew not how to come to you. Now therefore, since it has pleased the Lord that I should see you, I have the will to do whatever shall be pleasing to you." But the blessed Father, considering his fervour, rejoiced in the Lord, especially for that he had then few brethren, and it seemed to him that for his simplicity and purity this should be a good Religious. But he said to him, "Brother, if you wilt be of our life and society, you must strip you of all that which you may not own without scandal, and give it to the poor, according to the counsel of the Holy Gospel, since all my brethren that were able have done the same." When he had heard this, he went straightway to the field where he had left his cattle, and loosened them and led one of them before blessed Francis, and said to him, "Brother, so many years have I served my father and all them of my house, and though this portion of my heritage be small, I wish to take this ox for my part, and give it to the poor as may seem best to you." But his parents and his brothers, who were still little, and all of his house, seeing

that he would leave them, began to weep so sore and to utter such plaintive noises with grief, that blessed Francis was moved by it to pity, because it was a large family, and feeble. And blessed Francis said to them, "Prepare a feast for us all, and let us all eat together, and weep not, for I will make you truly joyful." So they prepared it forthwith, and all together with great joy did eat. But after meat blessed Francis said, "This, your son, wishes to serve God, and ye ought not to be saddened because of this, but rather to rejoice. For not only as regards God, but also according to this life it shall be reputed to you great honour and profit of souls and bodies, that God is honoured of your flesh, and all our brothers will be your sons and brothers. And because he is a creature of God, and wishes to serve his Creator, to serve Whom is to reign, I cannot nor ought not to return him unto you, but that ye may have consolation concerning him, I will that he give you that ox as to the poor, though he ought to give it to other poor folk according to the Gospel." And all were consoled with the words of Saint Francis, and chiefly they rejoiced on account of the ox, because it was returned to them, since they were very poor. And because pure and holy simplicity in himself and in others greatly pleased blessed Francis, he clothed him with the garments of religion straightway, and led him with him humbly for his fellow. For he was of so great simplicity, that he believed himself bound to all things which blessed Francis did. Whence when the blessed Father stood in any church or in any place to pray, he also wished to see him, that he might conform himself in all his acts and gestures to him. And so if the blessed Father bent his knees, or raised his hands to heaven, or spat, or sighed, he himself did all these things in like manner. But when blessed Francis perceived this, he began with great gladness to reprove him for simplicity of this kind. To whom he answered, "Brother, I promised to do all things which you didst, and therefore I must conform to you in all things." And at this the blessed Father wondered and rejoiced

wonderfully, beholding in him such purity and simplicity. But he afterwards began to profit so much that blessed Francis and all the other friars wondered greatly at his perfection. And after a little time he died in that holy profit of virtues. Whence afterwards blessed Francis with joy of mind and body was wont to tell among the friars of his conversion, naming him not Brother, but Holy, John.

CHAPTER LVIII

HOW HE PUNISHED HIMSELF BECAUSE HE HAD DONE SHAME TO A LEPER

But blessed Francis, having returned to the church of blessed Mary of the Portiuncula, found Brother James the Simple with a certain leper much ulcerated. For the blessed Father had commended that leper and all the others to him, because he was as it were their physician, and he freely touched their wounds and cleansed them and took care of them, for then the friars used to abide in the hospitals of the lepers. The holy Father therefore said to Brother James, as if reproving him, "You ought not to lead out these Christians, because it is neither decent for you nor for them." For though he wished to serve them, yet he was unwilling that he should take those who were much afflicted out of the hospital, because men are accustomed to hold such in abhorrence, and Brother James himself was so simple, that he used to go with them from the hospital up to the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, as he would have gone with the friars. But blessed Francis used to call the lepers themselves Christian brothers. And when he had said these things, the blessed Father immediately blamed himself, believing that the leper had been put to shame for the blame which he had thrown on Brother James. And therefore being fain to satisfy God and the leper, he told his fault to Brother Peter of Catana, who was then Minister-General. And

he said, "I will that you should confirm to me the penance which I have chosen to do for this fault, and that you should in no respect contradict me." Who answered, "Brother, do that which shall please you." For Brother Peter so much venerated and feared him that he did not presume to contradict him, though he was often thence afflicted. Then said the blessed Father, "Let this be my penance, that I eat in one dish with my Christian brother." When therefore blessed Francis sat down to table with the leper and with the other friars, one dish was placed between blessed Francis and the leper. But he was all ulcerated and loathsome, and especially he had his fingers shrivelled and bleeding with which he took up lumps from the dish, so that when he put them in the dish the blood and matter of the fingers flowed into it. And seeing this Brother Peter and the other friars were much saddened, but did not dare to say anything on account of the fear and reverence of the holy Father. He who saw this wrote it down, and bears testimony of these things.

CHAPTER LIX

HOW HE PUT THE DEMONS TO FLIGHT WITH HUMBLE WORDS

On a certain time blessed Francis went to the church of blessed Peter of Bovara near the castle of Trevi in the valley of Spoleto, and with him went Brother Pacificus, who in the world used to be called the King of Verse, a noble and courtly doctor of singers. But that church was abandoned. Therefore the blessed Father said to Brother Pacificus, "Return to the leper hospital, for I wish to remain here alone tonight, and tomorrow very early return to me." But when he had been left alone there, and had said complines and other prayers, he wished to be quiet and to sleep, but he was not able. For his spirit began to fear and to feel diabolical suggestions, and immediately he went out of the church and

crossed himself, saying, "On the part of Almighty God I say unto you, Demons, that ye may work on my body whatever is given to you to do by the Lord Jesus Christ, since I am ready to sustain all things. For since I hold that my body is my greatest enemy, ye shall but avenge me on my adversary and worst enemy." And immediately those suggestions altogether ceased, and having returned to the place where he was lying, he slept in peace.

CHAPTER LX

OF THE VISION OF FRIAR PACIFICUS WHICH HE SAW, AND HOW HE HEARD THAT THE SEAT OF LUCIFER WAS RESERVED FOR BLESSED FRANCIS

But when it was morn Brother Pacificus returned to him. He was then standing before the altar in prayer, and Brother Pacificus waited for him without the choir praying likewise before a crucifix. And when he began to pray, he was raised up and snatched into Heaven, whether in the body or out of the body God only knoweth. And he saw in Heaven many seats, among which he saw one more notable than the others, and beyond all the rest glorious, shining and adorned with every precious stone. And admiring its beauty, he began to wonder in himself whose that seat should be. And immediately he heard a voice saying unto him, "This was the seat of Lucifer, and in his stead shall the humble Francis sit." And when he returned to himself, blessed Francis forthwith came out to him, at whose feet that brother fell in the shape of a cross with his arms extended. And looking upon him as if he were already in Heaven sitting in that seat, he said to him, "Father, do me this grace, and ask the Lord that He may have mercy on me, and forgive me my sins." But the blessed Father stretching out his hands raised him, and forthwith knew that he had seen something in prayer, for he seemed all transfigured, and he spoke to

blessed Francis as one not living in the flesh, but as already reigning in Heaven. But after, because he was unwilling to tell the vision to the blessed man, he began to speak with himself words as if from afar, and among other things he said to him, "What think you of thyself, Brother?" The blessed Father answered and said unto him, "It seems to me that I am a greater sinner than any one in the whole world." And immediately it was revealed to the soul of Brother Pacificus, "By this you may know that the vision which you have seen was true, since as Lucifer was ejected from his place on account of his pride, so Francis on account of his humility shall merit to be exalted, and to sit in it."

CHAPTER LXI

HOW HE MADE HIMSELF TO BE DRAGGED BOUND WITH A ROPE AT HIS NECK UNCLOTHED BEFORE THE PEOPLE

But on a certain time when he had got a little stronger from a certain very great infirmity of his, it seemed to him that he had had some allowance in that weakness, though he had eaten but little. And rising on a certain day, though he was not entirely freed from the quartan fever, he made the people of the city of Assisi be called together in the market place, for preaching. But when the sermon was done he warned the people that no one should go away from thence until he should return to them. And entering the cathedral of Saint Rufinus with many friars and with Brother Peter of Catana who had been canon of that church and was chosen first Minister-General by blessed Francis, he spoke to that brother Peter, ordering him by obedience, that he should without contradiction do whatever he should say to him. Brother Peter answered him, "Brother, I neither may nor ought, will or do anything concerning you and me, except as it may please you." Casting off therefore his tunic, blessed Francis bade him drag him unclad before the people with a

cord bound round his neck to the place where he had preached. He bade another friar that he should take a dish full of ashes and should go up to the place where he had preached, and when he should have been drawn up to that place to throw the ashes over his face. Yet this last did not obey him in this on account of the great compassion by which he was moved towards him. And Brother Peter, taking the cord bound to his neck, dragged him after him as he had ordered him. But he was weeping very sore, and the other friars with him shed tears of compassion and of bitterness. When he was thus led naked in the sight of all men up to the place where he had preached, he said, "You, and all those who, after my example, leave this world and enter religion and the life of the friars, believe me to be a holy man, but I confess to God and to you that I have eaten in this my infirmity flesh and broth made with flesh." And all began to weep over him for great pity and compassion, especially because it was then winter time and a very intense frost, and he was not yet recovered from the quartan fever. And striking their breasts they accused themselves, saying, "If this saint, for just and manifest necessity, accuses himself with so much shame of body, whose life we know to be holy, whom even we know to be living in the flesh as if almost dead on account of the great abstinence and austerity which he has made to his body from the beginning of his conversion to Christ, what shall we wretched ones do, who for the whole time of our life have lived and still live according to the desires of the flesh."

CHAPTER LXII

HOW HE WISHED THAT WHATEVER OF COMFORT HIS BODY RECEIVED SHOULD BE KNOWN

Likewise on a certain time when he had eaten in a certain hermitage in the Advent fast (Saint Martin's Lent), cakes

cooked with lard on account of his infirmities, for which oil was very unwholesome; Lent being finished, when he should preach to a great crowd, he said to them in the first word of his sermon, "You come to me with great devotion, believing me to be a holy man, but I confess to God and to you, that I have eaten in this Lent cakes cooked with lard." Nay, well-nigh always when he used to eat with any seculars, or when any bodily comfort was given him by the friars on account of his infirmities, immediately in the house and outside, before those friars who did not know of it, and the seculars, he was accustomed to say openly, "I have eaten such and such a food." For he was unwilling to hide from men what was laid open to God. Likewise also, wherever, in the presence of whatever Religious and laymen, his spirit was moved to pride or vainglory, or to any fault, he confessed it immediately in their presence openly, without any veil. Whence once he said to his companions, "Thus would I live in hermitages and in the other places where I abide, as if all men could see me. For if they think me to be a holy man, and I lead not the life which becomes a holy man, I should be a hypocrite." And thus, when on account of the weakness of the spleen and coldness of the stomach, one of his fellows who was his Warden wished to sew under his tunic a little foxskin opposite his spleen and stomach, especially as there was then a great cold, blessed Francis answered him, "If you would that I have fox-skin under my tunic you must put a piece of that skin outside, so that every one may know by this that I have foxskin inside." And so he caused it to be done, but he wore it very little, though it would have been very necessary to him.

CHAPTER LXIII

HOW HE ACCUSED HIMSELF IMMEDIATELY OF VAIN-GLORY IN GIVING CHARITY

When he went through the city of Assisi, a certain poor old woman begged an alms of him for the love of God. And he immediately gave her the mantle which he had on his back, and forthwith without delay he confessed in the presence of those who followed how he had thence vainglory. And we have seen and heard so many other examples like to these of his very great humility, we who were always in his company, that neither with words nor with letters can we narrate them. For in this blessed Francis had his chief and highest study, that he should not be a hypocrite before God, and though on account of his infirmity an allowance would have been necessary to him, yet he took thought with himself, always to show a good example to the friars and to others, whence he sustained all poverty patiently that he might take away from all any occasion of murmuring.

CHAPTER LXIV

HOW HE DESCRIBED THE STATE OF PERFECT HUMILITY IN HIMSELF

When the time of the Chapter was drawing near, the holy Father said to his fellow, "It seems not to me that I am a Friar Minor, unless I be in the state which I will tell you. Behold, the friars invite me with great devotion to the Chapter, and moved by their devotion I go to the Chapter with them. But they, being gathered together, ask me to announce to them the Word of God, and to preach among them. And rising up, I preach to them as the Holy Spirit shall have taught me. Having finished therefore my sermon, put it that all cry out against me, 'We will not have you to reign over us, for you art not eloquent, as is becoming, and you art too simple and idiotic, and we fear greatly to have so simple and despised a superior over us, whence henceforth, presume not to call thyself our prelate!' And so they cast me out with blame and reproach. It would seem to me that I was not a Friar Minor, if

I did not rejoice to the same extent when they reproached me and cast me out with shame, unwilling that I should be their prelate, as when they venerate and honour me; holding their profit and usefulness to be equal in either case. For if I am glad when they exalt and honour me on account of their profit and devotion, where yet there may be a danger to my soul, much more ought I to rejoice and be glad of the profit and salvation of my soul when they blame me, where is certain gain of my soul."

CHAPTER LXV

HOW HE WISHED TO GO HUMBLY TO FOREIGN PARTS AS HE HAD SENT OTHER FRIARS, AND HOW HE TAUGHT THE FRIARS TO GO HUMBLY AND DEVOUTLY THROUGH THE WORLD

When that Chapter was finished in which many friars were sent to certain provinces over sea, blessed Francis, remaining with certain friars, said to them, "Dearest brethren, it behoves me to be the form and example of all friars. If therefore I have sent some of them to distant parts to bear labours and shame, hunger and thirst, and other privations; it is just, and holy humility requires it, that I should go likewise to some distant province, so that the friars may the more patiently sustain adversity when they shall have heard that I bear the same. Go, therefore, and pray the Lord that He may give me to choose that province which should be most to His praise and the profit of souls and the good example of our body." (For it was the manner of the most holy Father when he would go to any province, to pray first the Lord, and to set the friars to pray that the Lord would direct his heart to that same place which was most pleasing to Him.) The brethren therefore went to pray, and when it was finished they returned to him, and straightway he said to them, "In the name of Our Lord Jesus

Christ, and of the glorious Virgin Mary His Mother, and of all saints, I choose the province of France in which is a Catholic folk, especially because among all other Catholics they show great reverence to the Body of Christ, wherefore I shall converse with them most willingly."

For the holy Father had so much reverence and devotion to the Body of Christ, that he wished it to be written in the Rule that friars should have care and solicitude in the provinces where they should stay concerning this thing; and that they should admonish clerks and priests, to keep the Body of Christ in a good and decent place, which if they neglected, the friars should do it. He wished it also to be placed in the Rule that wherever friars should find the names of the Lord, and these words by which the body of the Lord is made, not well and decently placed, that they themselves should collect them and decently put them away, honouring the Lord in His words. And though these things were not written in the Rule, because it did not seem good to the Ministers that the friars should have this in command, yet he wished to leave his will to the friars concerning these things in his testament and in his other writings. Nay, on a certain time, he wished to send some friars through all the provinces carrying many fair and clean pyxes; and wherever they should find the Body of the Lord unsuitably preserved, they should put it honourably in those pyxes. Also he wished to send some other friars with good and new wafer-irons to make fair and clean hosts.

When therefore the holy Father chose those brethren whom he wished to take with him, he said to them, "In the name of the Lord, go two and two on the way humbly and decently, and especially with strict silence from the dawn till past the hour of tierce, praying the Lord in your hearts, and let not idle and useless words be so much as named among you. For though you walk, let your conversation be as humble and

seemly as if you were in a hermitage or in a cell. For wherever we are and walk, we may have always our cell with us. For Brother Body is our cell; and our soul is the hermit, who remains within his cell, to pray to God and to meditate on Him. Whence if the soul does not remain in quiet in its cell, little profits the Religious a cell made with hands? "And when he had arrived at Florence he found there Lord Hugo, the Bishop of Ostia, who was afterwards Pope Gregory. Who, when he had heard from the blessed man, that he wished to go into France, forbade him to go, saying, "Brother, I do not wish you to go beyond the mountains, because there are many prelates who would willingly hinder the good of your fellowship in the Roman Court. But I and the other Cardinals, who love that body, will more gladly protect and aid it, if you remain in the circuit of this province." And blessed Francis said to him, "My Lord, it is great shame to me to send my other brethren to remote provinces if I remain in these provinces, and am not partaker of the tribulations which they shall suffer on the Lord's behalf." But the Bishop said to him, as if reproving him, "Why have you sent your brethren so far to die with hunger and to sustain other tribulations?" Blessed Francis answered him with great fervour and with the spirit of prophecy, saying, "My Lord, think you that the Lord sent the friars on account of these provinces alone? But I say unto you in truth, that God chose out and sent the friars for the profit and welfare of the souls of all men of this world; and they shall be received, not only in the lands of the faithful, but even among the infidels, and shall gain many souls." Then the Bishop of Ostia wondered at his words, affirming that he spoke the truth. And thus he did not permit him to go into France, though blessed Francis sent thither Brother Pacificus with many other friars, but he himself returned to the valley of Spoleto.

CHAPTER LXVI

HOW HE TAUGHT CERTAIN FRIARS TO GAIN THE SOULS OF SOME THIEVES BY HUMILITY AND CHARITY

To a certain hermitage of friars above the Borgo San Sepolcro there came from time to time thieves, who used to lie in the woods and spoil the passers-by. And some of the friars used to say that it was not good to give them charity, but others gave out of compassion, that they might admonish them to penitence. In the meantime blessed Francis came to that place, whom the friars asked whether it were right to give charity to them. And the holy Father said to them, "If you will do as I will tell you, I trust in the Lord that you shall gain their souls. Go therefore and get some good bread and good wine, and carry them into the wood where they dwell, and shout, saying, 'Brother thieves, come to us, because we are friars, and we bring you good bread and good wine.' They will come forthwith, but you spread a cloth on the earth, and place on it the bread and wine, and serve them humbly and joyfully until they have eaten. But after the meal ye shall speak to them of the Word of the Lord, and finally ye shall ask of them for the love of God that they will promise you this first petition, that they shall not strike nor do evil to any one, in his body. For if ye ask all things at once, they will not hear you, but on account of your humility and charity they will immediately promise you this. Then on another day on account of their good promise, you will carry to them with the bread and wine some eggs and cheese; and ye shall serve them until they have eaten, and after the meal ye shall say to them, 'Why stay ye here all the day to die of hunger and to bear so much adversity, and do many evil things for the which ye shall lose your souls except ye be converted to the Lord? Better is it that ye should serve the Lord, Who will give you in this life the necessities of the body, and in the end will save your souls.' Then the Lord shall inspire them; so that for your humility and charity that ye have shown them they shall be

converted." And so the friars did all these things as the holy Father bade them; and those robbers, through the grace and mercy of God, heard and kept letter by letter and point by point all things which the friars humbly asked of them. Nay, on account of the humility and kindliness of the friars towards them, they began to humbly serve the friars themselves, carrying on their shoulders their wood up to the hermitage. And some of them at last entered religion. But the others, confessing their faults, did penance for their sins, promising in the hands of the friars for the future that they would live by the labour of their hands, and never again do such deeds.

CHAPTER LXVII

HOW FROM THE BLOWS OF THE DEMONS HE KNEW IT WAS MORE PLEASING TO THE LORD THAT HE SHOULD STAY IN POOR AND HUMBLE DWELLINGS RATHER THAN WITH CARDINALS

On a certain time blessed Francis went to Rome to visit my Lord of Ostia. And when he had remained some days with him, he visited also my Lord Leo the Cardinal, who was very devoted to the blessed men. And because it was then winter, and altogether unfit for going on foot because of the cold and the winds and the rain, he asked him to abide with him some days, and as a beggar to receive his food from him, with the other beggars who daily used to eat in his house. But this he said, because he knew that the blessed man ever would be received like a beggar wherever he was guested, though the Cardinals and the Lord Pope would receive him with the greatest devotion and reverence, and would venerate him as a saint. And he added, "I will give you a good house apart where you mayest abide and where you canst pray and eat as you wishest." Then Friar Angelo Tancredi, who was one of the twelve first friars, who also

abode with the said Cardinal, said to the blessed man, "Brother, there is near here a certain tower right spacious and apart, where you mayest abide as if in a hermitage." And when the blessed man had seen it, it pleased him, and returning to the Lord Cardinal he said to him, "My Lord, perchance I will stay with you for some days." And my Lord Cardinal rejoiced greatly. So Brother Angelo went and prepared the place in the tower for the blessed man and his fellow. And because blessed Francis would not come down from thence as long as he should remain with the Cardinal nor wish any one to enter to him, Brother Angelo promised and took orders to daily carry food to him and his fellow. And when the blessed Father had gone there with his fellow; on the first night when he would sleep there, came demons and beat him very sore. And calling his fellow he said to him, "Brother, demons have beaten me very sore, and therefore I will that you remain with me, for I fear to stay alone." And that night his fellow abode near him. For blessed Francis trembled as a man who suffers fever, wherefore both watched through the whole night. In the meantime the holy Father said to his fellow, "Why have the demons beaten me, and why is that power of hurting me given them by the Lord?" And he said, "The demons are the sergeants of our Lord. For as the Podesta sends his sergeants to punish him who has sinned, so the Lord by sergeants, that is, by the demons who in this world are His ministers, corrects and chaveens those whom He loves. For many times he who is a perfect Religious sins ignorantly; whence since he knows not his sin, he is chaveened by demons, that he may diligently see and consider, within and without, those things in which he has offended, for whom the Lord loves with a true love, nothing in them He leaves unpunished. But by the mercy and grace of God, I know not that I have offended in anything which I have not amended by confession and satisfaction, nay, by His mercy God has granted me this gift that I may receive in prayer a clear knowledge of all things

in which I may please or displease Him. But it may be that He now chaveises me by His sergeants for that though my Lord Cardinal willingly showed me mercy, and though it is necessary to my body to receive this rest, yet my brethren who go through the world bearing hunger and many tribulations and the other friars who live in hermitages and poor little dwellings, when they shall hear that I live with my Lord Cardinal, may have an occasion of murmuring, saying, 'We bear so many adverse things, and he has his consolations.' But I am bound always to give them a good example, because for this reason I was given unto them. For the brethren are more edified when I abide in their own poor little dwellings among them, than in others; and they bear their tribulations more patiently when they hear that I bear also the same." And it was, therefore, the highest and continual study of our Father, that in all things he might afford a good example, and that he might take away any occasion of murmuring concerning him from other friars. And on account of this, well or ill, he suffered so much, that whichever friars knew him as we who were with him to the day of his death did, as often as they read those things or call them to memory, cannot contain themselves from tears, and they sustain all their tribulations and necessities with greater patience and joy. Therefore blessed Francis came down very early from the tower, and went to my Lord Cardinal; telling him all things that had befallen him and what he had borne with his fellow: nay, he said to him, "Men think me to be a holy man, and behold demons have cast me out of a cell!" And my Lord Cardinal was much rejoiced with him. Yet because he knew and venerated him as a saint, he would not contradict him after he was unwilling to remain there. And so the holy man bidding him farewell, returned to the hermitage of Fonte Palumbo, near Rieti.

CHAPTER LXVIII

HOW HE BLAMED FRIARS WISHING TO GO BY THE WAY OF THEIR WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE, AND NOT BY THE WAY OF HUMILITY; AND FORETOLD THE REFORMATION OF THE ORDER TO ITS FIRST STATE

When blessed Francis was in the Chapter-General at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula (which was called the Chapter of the Mats, because there were no dwellings there except made of mats, and there were five thousand friars there), several wise and learned friars went to my Lord of Ostia who was there and said to him, "My Lord, we wish you to persuade Brother Francis to follow the counsel of wise brethren, and to allow himself now and then to be led by them." And they quoted the Rule of Saint Augustine, of Saint Benedict, and of Saint Bernard, who taught thus and thus to live in order. And when the Cardinal had repeated this to the holy man, by way of admonition, blessed Francis answered him nothing, but took him by the hand and led him to the friars assembled in the Chapter, and spoke thus to the friars in the fervour and power of the Holy Spirit, "My brethren, my brethren, the Lord called me by the way of simplicity and humility, and this way hath He shown me in truth for me and those who will believe and imitate me. And therefore I would that ye name not to me any rule, neither of Saint Augustine, nor Saint Benedict, nor of Bernard, nor any way or form of living, but that which was mercifully shown and given me by the Lord. And the Lord said to men that He wished me to be a new covenant in this world, and He would lead me by another way than by this science. But God will confound you through your wisdom and knowledge, and I trust in the sergeants of the Lord that God will punish you by them, and that you will yet return to your state with reproach, willye, nillye." Then the Cardinal was much amazed; and answered nothing, and all the friars feared greatly.

CHAPTER LXIX

HOW HE FORESAW AND PREDICTED THAT LEARNING WOULD BE THE RUIN OF THE ORDER

Blessed Francis grieved greatly if any one, neglecting virtue, sought after the science which puffeth up, especially if any one did not persist in that vocation to which he was called from the beginning. For he was wont to say, "My brethren who are led by desire of learning shall find their hands empty in the day of tribulation. I would therefore, that they be rather strengthened in virtues, that when the time of tribulation shall come they shall have the Lord with them in their straits. For a time of tribulation is to come, when books shall be useful for nothing, and shall be thrown in windows and cupboards." (This he did not say, for that the reading of Holy Scriptures displeased him, but that he might draw back all from overmuch care of learning. For he wished them rather to be good by charity than smatterers through the desire of knowledge. For he weighed beforehand the time shortly to come, in which already he foreknew that knowledge which puffeth up should be an occasion of ruin. Whence appearing after his death to one of his fellows too intent on the study of preaching, he reproved and prohibited him, and ordered him that he should study to tread the path of humility and simplicity.)

CHAPTER LXX

HOW IN THE TIME OF THE TRIBULATION TO COME, THOSE WHO SHALL ENTER THE ORDER SHALL BE BLESSED, AND THOSE WHO SHALL BE PROVED SHALL BE BETTER THAN THEIR PREDECESSORS

Blessed Francis used to say, "The time shall come in which this Order beloved by God shall be so defamed by the bad example of evil friars, that it will be ashamed to go forth in public. But they who in that time shall come to join the

Order, shall be led only by the working of the Holy Spirit, and flesh and blood shall raise no stain on them, and they shall be blessed by the Lord. Though meritorious deeds be not found in them, since charity grows cold which made the saints work fervently, very great temptations shall come upon them; and those who in that time shall have been found worthy shall be better than their predecessors. But woe unto those, who, with the form and appearance only of religious conversation, applauding themselves in their wisdom and confident in their learning, be found idle (that is, not exercising themselves in virtuous works, in the way of penitence, and in the pure observance of the Gospel; which by their profession they are bound to observe pure and simply). For these will not resist with constancy the temptation which shall be permitted to happen for the proving of the elect; but those who have been tried and approved shall receive the crown of life, to which in the meantime the malice of the reprobate urges them on."

CHAPTER LXXI

HOW HE ANSWERED HIS FELLOW WHO ENQUIRED WHY HE DID NOT CORRECT THE EXCESSES WHICH WERE IN THE ORDER IN HIS OWN DAY

A certain companion once said to blessed Francis, "Father, forgive me that I would say unto you, which already many have thought." And he said, "You knowest how formerly through the grace of God, the whole Order flourished in the purity of perfection; how all friars with great fervour and solicitude observed holy poverty in everything, in small and poor buildings and garniture, in few and poor books and clothes; and as in these so in all other externals they were of one will and fervour, and in the solicitude of observing all things which pertain to our profession and vocation and the example of all; and thus they were of one mind in the love of

God and their neighbour, as men truly apostolical and evangelical. But now of late this purity and affection begin to change, though many speak and excuse the friars on account of their multitude, saying that on this account the Rule cannot be observed by them. Nay, many friars have come to such blindness that they think that people will be edified and turn to devotion by this rather than by the former way, and it seems to them that they on this account live more decently, despising and counting for naught the way of holy simplicity, humility, and poverty, which was the beginning and foundation of our Order. Whence we, considering these things, believe that they are displeasing to thee; but we wonder much if they do displease you, why you dost allow and not correct them." The holy man answered and said to him, "May the Lord have mercy on you, brother, since you wilt be contrary and adversary to me, and mix me up in those things which pertain not to my office. For as long as I had the office of prelacy over the friars, and they remained in their vocation and profession, though from the beginning of my conversion I was always infirm, yet with my small solicitude I satisfied them by example and preaching. But after I saw that the Lord multiplied the number of the friars, and that they, on account of their lukewarmness and want of spirit,, began to depart from the right and secure way by which they had been used to walk, and entering on the broader way which leads to death, were not following their vocation and profession and a good example, nor did they wish to abandon that dangerous and deadly journey which they had begun for my preaching and admonition and the example which I showed to them continually, therefore, I handed over the rule of the Order to the Lord and the Ministers. Whence, though at the time when I gave up the office of the prelacy of the friars, I excused myself before them in the Chapter-General, that on account of my infirmities I was not able to have the charge of them, yet if the friars wish to walk according to my will even now, for

their consolation and utility, I would not that they should have any other Minister except me until the day of my death." (For from when a faithful and good subject knows and observes the will of his superior, the prelate need have little solicitude concerning him.) "Nay, so much would I rejoice at the profit and the welfare of the brethren on account of their and my gain, that if I were lying ill in bed I should not be ashamed to satisfy them, because my office (that is of prelacy) is spiritual only (namely, to keep under faults and to correct and amend them spiritually). But since I am not able to correct and amend them by preaching, admonition, and example, I will not become an executioner, punishing and flogging them, like the magistrates of this world. For I trust in the Lord that the invisible enemies, who are the sergeants of the Lord for punishment in this world and the next, will take vengeance on those who have transgressed the commands of God and the vow of their profession, and will make them to be corrected by the men of this world to their disgrace and shame, and thus shall they return to their vocation and profession. Yet truly, until the day of my death I will not cease at once by example and the good works which the Lord has shown me to teach the brethren, and walk by that way which I have taught and shown them by word and example; that they may be inexcusable before God; and I am not bound to give account of them in the presence of God."

After this are written the words which Brother Leo, the companion and confessor of Saint Francis, wrote for Brother Conrad of Offida, at Saint Damian near Assisi, saying that he had them from the mouth of the blessed man, the which holy Father was standing near Assisi behind the pulpit of the church of Saint Mary of the Angels in prayer, lifting his hands on high to Christ, that He should have mercy on the people, in the great tribulation which must needs come.

And the Lord said, "Francis, if you wouldst that I should have mercy on the Christian people, do this for Me, that your Order may remain in that state in which it was placed, because of the whole world there will remain nothing more to Me, and I promise you, that for the love of you and of thine Order, I will not permit the world to suffer any tribulation. But I say unto you, that they must needs go back from the way in which I have placed them, and they will provoke Me to such wrath, that I shall rise against them, and I shall call the demons and I shall give them the power which they have desired, and they shall place such a scandal between them and the world, that there shall be no one who may wear your habit except in the woods. And when the world loses faith there will not remain any other light except that of thine Order, because I have placed them for a light to the world." And Saint Francis said, "On what shall my brethren live who shall dwell in the woods?" And Christ said, "I will feed them as I fed the sons of Israel, with manna in the desert; because they will be like them, and then shall they return to the first state, in which your Order was founded and begun."

CHAPTER LXXII

THAT THOSE SOULS ARE CONVERTED BY THE PRAYERS AND TEARS OF THE HUMBLE AND SIMPLE BRETHREN WHICH SEEM TO BE CONVERTED BY THE KNOWLEDGE AND PREACHING OF OTHERS

The most holy Father was unwilling that his friars should be desirous of knowledge and books, but he willed and preached to them that they should desire to be founded on holy humility, and to imitate pure simplicity, holy prayer, and our Lady Poverty, on which the saints and first friars did build. And this, he used to say, was the only safe way to one's own salvation and the edification of others, since

Christ, to Whose imitation we are called, showed and taught us this alone by word and example alike. For the blessed Father himself, looking forward to the future, knew by the Holy Spirit, and many times used to say to the brethren, that friars by occasion of teaching others, lose their own vocation, that is, holy humility, pure simplicity, prayer, and devotion, and our Lady Poverty. "And it will happen to them, that they will think themselves to be more filled with devotion and fired with love, and illuminated with the knowledge of God on account of their understanding of the Scriptures. Thence on occasion they will remain cold and empty within, and they cannot return to their first vocation, because they have wasted their time of living according to their vocation in vain and false study. And I fear that that which they seem to have will be taken away from them; because that which was given to them, that is, to hold and to imitate their vocation, they have altogether neglected." And he said, "There are many friars who place all their study and care in acquiring knowledge, leaving their holy vocation, and wandering with mind and body out of the way of humility and of holy prayer. Who, when they shall have preached to the people, and shall have learnt that some are thence edified or turned to penitence, will be puffed up or extol themselves for their work and another's profit, as for their own; when yet they have preached rather to their own condemnation and prejudice, and have done nothing more in truth, except as instruments of those by whom the Lord truly acquired this fruit. For those whom they believe to be edified and converted to penitence by their knowledge and preaching, the Lord has taught and converted by the prayers and tears of holy, poor, and hunble and simple friars, though those holy friars, for the most part, know not of it. For thus it is the will of God that they hiow it not lest they grow proud. These are my brethren of the Table Round, who lie hidden in deserts and hidden places, that more diligently they may give place to prayer and meditation,

deploring their own and others' sins, living simply and conversing numbly, whose sanctity is known of God, even when it is unknown to their brethren and to men. And when their souls are brought by the angels to the Lord, then the Lord shall show them the fruit of their labours, namely the many souls which by their example, prayers, and tears, are saved. And He shall say to them, ' My beloved sons, such and so many souls have been saved by your prayers, tears, and example; and because ye have been faithful over few things I will make you rulers over many things. Others, indeed, have preached and have laboured by the speeches of their wisdom and knowledge, and I, by your merits, have brought about the fruit of salvation. Therefore receive the reward of their labours and the fruit of your merits, which is an everlasting kingdom; which you have taken by the force of the violence of your humility and simplicity, and of your prayers and tears.' And thus these, carrying their sheaves (that is, the fruits and merits of their holy humility and simplicity), shall enter into the joy of the Lord rejoicing and exulting. But they who have taken no thought except to know and to show to others the way of salvation, doing nothing for themselves, shall stand naked and empty before the tribunal of Christ, bringing only sheaves of confusion, shame, and grief. Then shall the truth of holy humility and simplicity, and holy prayer and poverty, which is our vocation, be exalted and glorified and magnified, which truth those puffed up with the wind of science condemned with their life, and with the vain speeches of their wisdom, saying that the truth was falsehood, and like blind men, persecuting cruelly those who have walked in the truth. Then the error and falsity of their opinions by which they have walked, which they have preached for truth, by which they have thrown many into the pit of blindness, shall be ended in grief, confusion, and shame, and they themselves with their opinions shall be plunged in outer darkness with the spirits of darkness." Whence blessed Francis often used

to say concerning that word: then the barren hath born many, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble: "the barren is a good Religious, simple, humble, poor, and despised, who by his holy prayers and virtues continually edifies others, and brings forth good fruit with dolorous sighs." This word he used to say very often before the Ministers and other friars, especially in the Chapter-General.

CHAPTER LXXIII

HOW HE WILLED AND TAUGHT THAT PRELATES AND PREACHERS SHOULD EXERCISE THEMSELVES IN PRAYER AND WORKS OF HUMILITY

The faithful servant and perfect imitator of Christ, Francis, feeling himself to be most thoroughly transformed by the virtue of holy humility in Christ: above all other virtues desired this humility in his brethren, and that they might love, desire, acquire, and preserve this grace, he animated them incessantly both with word and example, and especially did he admonish and induce the Ministers and preachers to exercise works of humility. For he used to say that they ought not on account of the duty of their prelacy and their solicitude of preaching to neglect holy and devout prayer, or going for alms, working sometimes with their hands, and doing other works like the rest of the friars, for the sake of the good example and the profit of their own and others' souls. And he said, "For subject friars are much edified, when their Ministers and preachers spend time in prayer, and bend themselves willingly to works of utility, and lightly-esteemed duties. But otherwise they cannot without confusion, prejudice, and condemnation of themselves, admonish other friars concerning works; for it becomes us by the example of Christ rather to do than to teach, and to do and teach together."

CHAPTER LXXIV

HOW HE TAUGHT THE FRIARS TO KNOW WHEN HE WAS THE SERVANT OF GOD AND WHEN NOT

Blessed Francis once called together many friars, and said to them, "I have asked the Lord, that He would deign to show me when I am His servant. But the most gracious Lord in His condescension answered me, 'I know that you art truly My servant when you think, speak and do holy things.' Therefore have I called you, brethren, and have shown this to you, that I may be put to shame before you, when you shall see me wanting in any of the aforesaid things."

CHAPTER LXXV

HOW HE WILLED EXPRESSLY THAT FRIARS LABOUR NOW AND THEN WITH THEIR HANDS

He used to say that lukewarm ones who did not apply themselves to any task busily and humbly would quickly be spewed out from the mouth of the Lord; so that no idle man could appear before him, without being immediately attacked with biting tooth. And thus he, the example of all perfection, laboured humbly with his hands, permitting nothing of the best gift of time to flow to waste. For he said, "I wish all my friars to labour and be exercised humbly in good works, that we be the less burdensome to men, and that neither heart nor tongue may wander in ease. But let those who know nothing learn to work." For he used to say that the profit and reward of the labour should not be left to the will of the labourer, but to the judgment of the warden or the community.

SECTION V

CONCERNING HIS ZEAL FOR THE PERFECTION OF THE RULE AND THE WHOLE ORDER

CHAPTER LXXVI

AND FIRSTLY, HOW HE USED TO PRAISE THE PROFESSION OF THE RULE AND WISH THE FRIARS TO KNOW IT, AND THAT IT SHOULD BE KEPT BY ALL FRIARS

Blessed Francis, perfectly zealous and a lover of the Observance of the Holy Gospel, was most ardently zealous for the common profession of our Rule, which is none other than the perfect Observance of the Gospel; and he endowed those who are and shall be true enthusiasts for it with his singular benediction. For he used to say to his imitators that this our profession was the book of life, the hope of salvation, the foretaste of Glory, the marrow of the Gospel, the way of the cross, the state of perfection, the key of Paradise, and the pact of the eternal covenant. This he wished to be held and known of all, and he wished his brethren to confer concerning it very often in their conversation against weariness, and in memory of their first oath full often to talk of it with their inner man. He taught them also that it should always be carried before their eyes in commemoration and memory of leading the life, and of the due Observance of the Rule, and what is more, he wished and taught that the friars should die with it.

CHAPTER LXXVII

OF A HOLY LAYMAN WHO WAS MARTYRED HOLDING THE RULE IN HIS HAND

Not unmindful therefore of the teaching of the most blessed Father, a certain lay brother, whom we believe undoubtedly to have been taken into the choir of martyrs, when he was among the infidels for the desire of martyrdom, and while he

was being led to martyrdom by the Saracens, holding the Rule with great fervour in both his hands, his knees humbly bent, said to his fellow, "I confess myself guilty, dearest brother, before the eyes of the Divine Majesty and before you, of all things which I have done against this Rule." To this short confession succeeded the sword, by which, finishing his life, he attained the crown of martyrdom. For he had entered the Order so young, that he was hardly able to bear the yoke of the Rule, and yet a youth he bore a shirt of mail next his flesh. Happy boy, who happily began, and more happily ended!

CHAPTER LXXVIII

HOW HE WISHED HIS ORDER TO BE ALWAYS SUBJECT TO THE PROTECTION AND CORRECTION OF THE ROMAN CHURCH

Blessed Francis used to say, "I will go and commend the Order of the Friars Minor to the holy Roman Church, by whose mighty rod its evil wishers may be terrified and kept in check, and the sons of God may rejoice everywhere with full liberty, to the increase of their eternal salvation. Let my sons recognise from this the sweet benefits of their mother, and ever embrace her reverend footsteps with spiritual devotion towards her. For under her protection, no evil son of Belial shall come into the Order, the impious shall pass through the vineyard of the Lord. That mother shall gather up the glory of our poverty and will not permit the joy of obedience and the reward of humility in any way to be darkened by the cloud of pride. She will preserve untouched the bonds of charity and of peace among us; striking with her strictest censure the unwilling, and the holy Observation of Evangelical purity shall continually flourish in her sight, nor will she suffer the odour of good fame and holy conversation to be lost at any time."

CHAPTER LXXIX

OF THE FOUR PREROGATIVES WHICH THE LORD GAVE TO THE ORDER REVEALING THEM TO SAINT FRANCIS

Blessed Francis said that he had obtained from the Lord these four things, announced to him by an angel: namely, that the Order and profession of Friars Minor should never fail even to the Day of Judgment. Also that no one setting himself with all his might to persecute the Order should live long. Also that no evil man, wishing to live evilly in the Order, should be able to remain in it long. Also whoever from his heart should love the Order, although he should be a sinner, yet he should at the last obtain mercy.

CHAPTER LXXX

OF WHAT SORT THE MINISTER-GENERAL SHOULD BE

Such was the zeal which he had for the preservation of perfection in the Order, and such seemed to him the perfection of the profession of the Rule, that he often used to consider who would be sufficient after his death for the governance of the whole Order, and to the conservation of perfection in it with the help of God; and he could come upon none fit.

Whence near the end of his life, a certain friar said to him, "Father, you wilt pass away to the Lord, and this family which has followed you will remain in the vale of tears. Point out any one in the Order, if you knowest one, in whom your mind might be at rest, on whom the burden of the Minister-General may be worthily imposed." Blessed Francis answered, pointing all his words with sighs, "My son, I behold no sufficient leader of so great and various an army, no shepherd of so wide and scattered a flock, but I will paint to you one in whom should shine out how the leader and

shepherd of this family ought to be. This man (he said) ought to be of most grave life, of great discretion, of laudable report, without private affections, lest while he loves more dearly on one side, scandal may grow in the whole body. There should be in him friendly zeal for prayer, yet so that he distribute certain hours to his own soul, and certain to his flock. For early in the morning, he should put before all things the most holy sacrifice of the Mass, and there, with long devotion, most earnestly commend himself and his flock to the divine protection. But after prayer he shall place himself in the midst that he may be questioned by all, answer to all, to provide for all with charity and patience and gentleness.

"For he should be no acceptor of persons, so that he should take no less heed of the simple and foolish than of the wise and learned. To whom if the gift of learning be granted, yet let him bear in his manner the stamp of piety and simplicity, of patience and humility, and let him cherish these virtues, in himself and in others, and continually exercise himself in preaching them, inciting others more by example than by speech. Let him be a hater of money, which is the chief corruption of our profession and perfection, and as the head and example to be imitated by all, let him in no wise be wasted by many store-chests.

"Let a habit and a book be sufficient for himself, but for others his pen-case with a reed and writing tablets, and a seal. Let him not be a collector of books nor much given to reading, lest haply that be taken from his office which is given to study. Let him console piously the afflicted, since he is the last resort of those in tribulation, lest if the remedies of health be wanting with him, despair of disease should prevail in the infirm. That he may bend the violent to gentleness, let him bear himself humbly, and relax something of his own rights that he may have profit of their

soul. To the runaways of the Order, as to sheep who have perished, let him extend the bowels of pity, and let him never deny mercy to them; knowing those temptations to be very great which could compel to such a fall, which temptations if the Lord should permit to him, he himself might haply fall into a greater precipice.

"I will that he, as vicar of Christ, be honoured by all with devotion and reverence and that he be provided for by all and in all things with all good-will, according to his necessity and the lowliness of our condition. Yet it will behoove him not to smile on honours; nor to rejoice more in favours than in injuries, so that his manners be not changed by honours except for the better. But if sometimes he may need pleasanter and better food; let him not take it privately but in a public place, that the shame may be taken from others of providing them in their infirmities and weaknesses. It behooves him chiefly to distinguish hidden knowledge, and to search out the truth from secret veins. Let him hold all accusations suspect in the beginning, until the truth begin to appear by diligent examination. Let him not lend his ear to much speakers, and let him hold them especially suspect in accusations, nor lightly believe them. He should be such as would, for the desire of retaining vile honour, never injure nor relax the form of justice and equity. Yet so, that out of too much rigour the soul of no one may be destroyed, and out of superfluous gentleness sloth be not generated, and out of lax indulgence the dissolution of discipline come not: and thus that he be feared by all, and loved of those that fear him. Let him always think and feel the office of his prelacy rather a burden than an honour to him. I wish also that he have for fellows men well spoken of for honesty, rigid against their own wills, strong in need, pious and compassionate to delinquents, having equal affection to all, receiving nothing of their labour except the pure necessity of the body; and desiring nothing except the praise of God,

the welfare of the Order, the merit of their own souls, and the perfect health of all the brethren; suitably affable to all, and receiving those coming to them with holy joy, and showing the form and Observance of the Gospel, according to the profession of the Rule, in themselves purely and simply to all. Behold, I say, such should be the Minister-General of this Order, and such the fellows he should have."

CHAPTER LXXXI

HOW THE LORD SPAKE UNTO HIM, WHEN HE WAS GREATLY AFFLICTED ON ACCOUNT OF THE FRIARS WHO WERE DEPARTING FROM PERFECTION

Since, according to the measure of zeal which he continually had for the perfection of the Order, he must needs be sad if he saw or heard any imperfection therein, when he began to understand that some friars were giving an evil example to the Order, and that the friars (now at the highest point of their perfection and profession) had begun to decline, touched inwardly with too great sorrow of heart, on a time he said to the Lord in prayer, "Lord, I give back to Your charge the family which You have given me!" And immediately the Lord said to him, "Tell Me, oh simple and feeble-minded mannikin, why you art so sad when any man goes out of the Order, and when the friars do not walk by the way which I have shown thee? Also, tell Me Who has planted this order of friars? Who has made man to be converted to penitence; Who gives the virtue of perseverance? Is it not I? I have not chosen you over My household as a learned and eloquent man, because I wish neither you nor those that were true friars and true observers of the rule which I have given you, to walk by the way of science and eloquence. But I have chosen you a simple and unlearned man that you may know, both you and others, that I will watch over My flock, and I have placed you for a sign to them, that the

works which I work in you, they may work in themselves. For those who walk in the way I have shown you, have Me more abundantly. But those who wish to walk by another way, even that which they seem to have shall be taken away from them. Wherefore I say unto you, for the rest, be not so sad, but do what you do, work what you work, since I have planted in perpetual charity the Order of Friars. Whence you art to know that because I love them so much if any friar, having returned to his vomit, should die outside the Order, I will send another into the Order, who in his place shall have his crown. And if he be not born, I will make him to be born. And that you may know how freely I love the life and Order of Friars; let it be granted that in the whole Order there should not remain except three, yet even then it shall be My Order, and I will not give it up for ever." And when he heard these words his mind remained wonderfully consoled. And though on account of the great zeal which he always had for the perfection of the Order he was not able wholly to contain himself from growing vehemently sad when he heard of any imperfection done by the friars by which evil example or scandal might arise, yet after he was thus strengthened by the Lord he recalled to memory that word of the psalm: I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep your righteous judgments: "and to preserve the rule which the Lord Himself gave to me, and to those who would wish to imitate me."

"But all those friars have obliged themselves to this as I; and therefore since I have put off me the burden of the brethren by reason of my infirmities and other reasonable causes, I am not bound further than to pray for the Order, and to show a good example to the brethren. For this I have from the Lord and know for truth, that if infirmities did not excuse me, the greatest help which I could give the Order is, to spend the time daily in prayer for it to the Lord, because He governs, keeps, and protects it. For in this, I have bound

myself to the Lord and to the brethren; that if any friar should perish by my evil example, I will be bound to render reason for him to the Lord." These words he used to speak within himself to quiet his heart, and he also used to explain it right often to the friars in his discourses and at Chapters. Whence if any friar said at any time to him, that he ought to interfere with the governance of the Order, he used to answer saying, "The friars have their Rule, and have sworn to keep it. And that they may not have any excuse on my account, after it pleased the Lord to command me to be their prelate, I swore before them likewise to observe it. Whence, since the friars know what they ought to do, and what also to avoid, there remains nothing, except that I should teach them by my works; since for this cause I am given to them, in my life and after my death."

CHAPTER LXXXII

OF THE SINGULAR ZEAL WHICH HE HAD TO THE PLACE OF BLESSED MARY AND OF THE CONSTITUTIONS WHICH HE HAD MADE AGAINST IDLE WORDS THERE

Above the other dwellings of the Order, he had a singular zeal and especial desire always, while he lived, to observe all perfection of life and conversation in the holy dwelling of Saint Mary of the Angels, as toward the head and mother of the whole Order; intending and willing that place to be the form and example of humility and poverty and all Evangelical Perfection for all places, and that the friars staying there should ever be, beyond other friars, circumspect and solicitous in doing and avoiding all things which tend to the perfection of the Observance of the Rule. Whence on a certain time, to avoid idleness which is the root of all evils, especially in a Religious, he ordained that each day after meals the friars should engage with him in some work lest they should lose altogether or in part, the good

which they had gained in the time of prayer by useless and idle words, to which man is especially disposed after food. Also he ordered and commanded it to be firmly observed; that if any of the friars idling or working among the brethren, should utter any idle word, he should be bound to say one Pater Noster, praising God in the beginning and the end of the prayer. Yet so, that if by chance he, conscious of his fault, should have confessed that which he had done, he should say the Pater Noster for his own soul, together with the Laudes Domini as has been said. But if he were first blamed by any other friar, then he should be bound to say the Pater Noster as aforesaid for the soul of the brother rebuking him. But if he who was blamed excused himself, and would not say the Pater Noster, he should be bound in the same way to say it twice for the soul of the brother reproving him. But if, by the testimony of himself or of another, it should prove to be true that he had said that idle word, then he should say also the said Laudes at the beginning and end of his prayer, so loudly that he may be heard or understood by all friars standing round about. Which friars, while he is saying it, shall hold their peace and listen. But if anybody seeing and hearing a brother say an idle word shall keep silent and shall not reprove him, he shall be bound in the same way to say the Pater Noster with the Laudes for his soul. And any friar whatever entering a cell or a house, or any place, who shall find there a friar or friars, should immediate devoutly thank and praise the Lord. The most holy Father was always solicitous to repeat these Laudes, and he taught other friars with a most ardent will and desire and excited them to saying those Laudes carefully and devoutly.

CHAPTER LXXXIII

HOW HE ADMONISHED THE FRIARS THAT THEY SHOULD NEVER LEAVE THAT PLACE

Though blessed Francis knew that the kingdom of Heaven was established in every place of the earth, and though he believed that in every place the divine grace could be given to the elect of God, yet he had found the dwelling of blessed Mary of the Portiuncula to be filled with richer grace, and to be frequented by the heavenly visitations of celestial spirits. For this reason he used often to say to the friars, "See, oh my sons, that ye never leave this place, if you are thrown out on one side enter by another, for this place is holy, and the habitation of Christ and of the Virgin His mother. Here, when we were few, the Most High increased us, here He enlightened the souls of His poor by the light of His wisdom, here He inflamed our wills by the fire of His love. Here he who shall pray with a devout heart shall obtain what he seeks, and an offender shall be more heavily punished. For which cause, sons, hold this dwelling most worthy with reverence and honour as truly the dwelling of God, singularly beloved by Him and His mother, and therein with your whole heart with the speech of exultation and confession, confess to God the Father and to His Son Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit."

CHAPTER LXXXIV

OF THE PREROGATIVES WHICH THE LORD WROUGHT IN THE DWELLING OF SAINT MARY

Holy of holies truly is this place of places.
Worthily held worthy of great honours.
Happy its surname more happy is its name.
And now its third name arises, omen of the gift.
The Angelic presence here casts abroad the light.
Here watches oft by night sounding hymns with the voice.
Afterward all fell to ruin Francis raised it up again.
Out of the three it was one which the Father himself repaired.

This the Father chose when with sackcloth he clothed his members.
Here he broke the body and forced it to obey the mind.
Here by the fire of his love he kindled our wills.
Here within the temple was begotten the Order, of Minors.
While the Father's example a crowd of men doth follow.
Clara, the spouse of God was here the first time shorn.
Cast off the pomps of the world and followed Christ.
Here the renowned birth of brothers at once and of sisters.
The holy mother bare by whom she brought back Christ to the world.
Here was made narrow the broad road of the old world.
And virtue made wider for the chosen race.
Here grew the Rule Holy Poverty reborn.
Pride smitten down the cross called back among us.
Thus where was troubled Francis, and sore wearied.
Here was he rested his death here was renewed.
Here was he shown the truth whereof he doubted.
Nay, here was granted whatever that Father desired.

SECTION VI

OF HIS ZEAL FOR THE PERFECTION OF THE BRETHREN

CHAPTER LXXXV

AND, FIRSTLY, HOW HE DESCRIBED TO THEM THE PERFECT FRIAR

The most blessed Father, having transformed in some sort his brethren into saints by the ardour of the love and the fervour of the zeal which he had for their perfection, often thought within himself, by what conditions and virtues a good Friar Minor should be adorned. And he used to say that he would be a good Friar Minor who should have the life and conditions of these holy friars, to wit: the faith of Brother

Bernard, which he had most perfectly, with the love of poverty: the simplicity and poverty of Brother Leo, who was truly of the holiest purity: the courtesy of Brother Angelo, who was the first knight who came to the Order, and who was adorned with all courtesy and benignity: the gracious and natural sense, with the fair and devout eloquence, of Brother Masseo: the mind raised in contemplation, which Brother Giles had in the highest perfection: the virtuous and continual labour of holy Rufinus, who without intermission prayed always, for even when sleeping or doing anything, his mind was always with the Lord: the patience of Brother Juniper, who arrived at the perfect state of patience, because of the perfect truth of his own vileness which he had before his eyes: and the desire in the highest degree of imitating Christ through the bodily and spiritual strength of the cross, of Brother John of the Lauds, who in his time was strong of body above all men: the charity of Brother Roger, whose whole life and conversation was in the fervour of charity: and the solicitude of Brother Lucido, who was of the greatest solicitude, and was unwilling to stay in one place for a month, but when it pleased him to stay in any place, immediately he went away from there, and said, "We have no dwelling-place here but in Heaven."

CHAPTER LXXXVI

HOW HE DESCRIBED SHAMEFAST EYES, THAT HE MIGHT TEACH BECOMING BEHAVIOUR

Among the other virtues which he loved and desired to be in the brethren, after the foundation of holy humility, he specially loved the fairness and cleanness of decency. Whence wishing to teach the friars to have shamefast eyes, he was accustomed to represent wanton eyes by this tale: A pious and powerful king sent to the queen two messengers successively. The first returns and brings back word for word,

and speaks nothing of the queen. For he had held his eyes in his head wisely, nor had cast them at all upon the queen. The other returned and after a few words wove a long history of the beauty of the queen: "Truly," said he, "Lord, I have seen a most beautiful woman; happy is he who enjoys her!" And the king said to him, "You, wicked servant, have cast shameless eyes on my wife; it is plain that you have wished subtly to obtain that you have seen." He ordered the first therefore to be called again, and said to him, "What think you of the queen?" "She seems," said he, "to me right good, because she listened willingly and patiently" (and he answered wisely). And the king said to him, "But what of the beauty which is in her?" He answered, "My Lord, it is yours to behold it, it was mine to carry your words." The sentence was given by the king: "You," said he, "having chaveer eyes, be of chaveer body in my chamber, and enjoy my delights, but let this shameless one go out from my house, lest he should pollute my bed." Therefore he used to say, "Who would not fear to look upon the spouse of Christ?"

CHAPTER LXXXVII

OF THE THREE SAYINGS WHICH HE LEFT TO THE FRIARS TO PRESERVE THEIR PERFECTION

On a certain time when on account of the weakness of his stomach he desired to vomit, on account of the great violence he did to himself, he vomited blood for the whole night until the morning. And when his companions saw him ready to die, through his great weakness and affliction, they said to him with the greatest grief and shedding of tears, "Father, what shall we do without thee? You wast ever our father and mother, begetting and bringing us forth in Christ. You wast a leader and a shepherd to us, a master and a corrector, teaching and correcting us more by example than by word. Whither therefore shall we go, sheep without a

shepherd, orphans without a father, rude and simple men without a leader? Where shall we go to seek you, glory of poverty, praise of simplicity, and honour of our vileness? Who shall show us, blind ones, henceforth the way of truth; where will the speaking mouth be, and the tongue that counselled us? Where will be the fervent spirit, directing us in the way of the cross; and strengthening us to evangelical perfection? Where wilt you be that we may come to you, light of our eyes; that we may seek you, consoler of our souls? Behold, Father, you dies; behold, you desert us thus desolate, leaving us thus sad and bitter; behold, that day, the day of weeping and bitterness, the day of desolation and sadness draws near! Behold the bitter day which we have always been fearing to see since we have been with thee; even when we were not able to think of it. Nor is it strange, truly, because your life is a continuous light to us, and your words were torches, burning and guiding us continually to the way of the cross and evangelical perfection, to the love and imitation of the most sweet Crucified One! And therefore, Father, forthwith bless us and your other friars whom you have begotten in Christ; and leave to us some memorial of your will; that your brethren may have you always in memory, and that they may say, 'These words our Father left to his brethren and his sons at his death.'" Then the most pious Father, turning his paternal eyes on his sons, said to them, "Call to me Brother Benedict of Pirato." For that brother was a priest, holy and discreet, who celebrated for blessed Francis while he lay there infirm (because always when he was able, | he wished to have or hear a mass as long as he was sick). And when he had come to him, he said to him, "Write how I bless my brethren who are in the Order, and who shall come, unto the end of the world. And since on account of my weakness and the pain of my infirmity I may not speak, in these three words I make plain my will and intention briefly to all my brethren, present and to come; namely, that in token of my memory and benediction and

will, they should always love one another like as I have loved and do love them; that they should always love and observe our Lady Poverty, and always remain faithful subjects to the prelates and clergy of holy Mother Church."

For thus in the Chapter of the friars our Father had always been anxious at the end of the Chapter to bless and absolve all friars present and to come in the Order, and even out of Chapter he did the same many times in the fervour of his charity. But he used to warn the friars, that they should fear and guard themselves from evil example; and he cursed all those who by evil example provoked men to blaspheme the Order and life of the friars, because good and holy poor men are shamed by this and much afflicted.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

OF THE LOVE WHICH HE SHOWED TO THE FRIARS WHEN NEAR HIS DEATH, GIVING TO EACH A MOUTHFUL OF BREAD BY THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

On a certain night blessed Francis was so weighed upon by the pains of his infirmities, that he could neither rest nor sleep that whole night. But in the morning, when his pains had a little ceased, he caused all the friars in the dwelling to be called. And placing his right hand on the head of each of them, he blessed them all, present and absent, and those who should come to the Order up to the end of the world; and he seemed to have compassion on himself, because he was not able to see all his brethren and his sons before his death. But wishing in his death to imitate his Lord and Master, as he had perfectly imitated Him in his life, he ordered loaves to be brought to him, and blessed them, and made them to be broken into portions; because on account of his great weakness he was not strong enough to break it. And taking it, he handed to each of the friars a portion,

bidding him eat the whole of it. Whence as the Lord before His death wished in token of His love to eat with His disciples on the Thursday, so blessed Francis, His perfect imitator, wished to show the same sign of love to his brethren. And that he wished to do this in the likeness of Christ appears manifestly, because he afterwards asked if it were then Thursday. But one of those friars kept back a particle of that bread, and after the death of blessed Francis, many sick who tasted thereof were immediately liberated from their infirmities.

CHAPTER LXXXIX

HOW HE FEARED LEST THE FRIARS SHOULD COMPLAIN OF HIS INFIRMITY

When, on account of the pain of his infirmities he was not able to rest, and had seen that thereby the friars were much distracted and fatigued on his account, since he loved the souls of his brethren more than his own body, he began to fear lest from their too great labour on his account the friars should incur even the least offence before God on account of some impatience. Whence on a time he said with piety and compassion to his companions, "Dearest brethren, and my little sons, let it not weary you to labour for my infirmity; since the Lord will return to you all the fruit of your works for His humble servant in this world and in the future; and those things which ye may not do now on account of the care of my infirmity, ye shall acquire even greater profit than if you had done them for yourself, since he who aids me, aids the whole religion and life of the friars. Nay more, ye ought to say thus, 'We will make our expense over you, and the Lord will be our debtor on your account.'" (But the holy Father said this wishing to assist and raise the cowardice of their spirits, on account of the great zeal which he had for the perfection of their souls. He feared also lest sometimes

tempted by that labour they might say, "We cannot pray nor suffer such labour," and thus they should become wearied and impatient of such small labour, and lose great fruit.)

CHAPTER XC

HOW HE ADMONISHED THE SISTERS OF SAINT CLARE

After blessed Francis made his "Praises to the Lord concerning His creatures," he made also certain holy words with a song for the consolation and edification of the poor ladies, knowing them to be greatly troubled concerning his infirmity; and when he could not visit them in person he sent those words to them by his companions. For he wished to make plain his will to them in those words, namely, how they should live and converse humbly, and be of one mind in charity. For he saw that their conversion and holy conversation was not only an exaltation of the Order of the friars but also a very great edification of the Church Universal. But knowing that in the beginning of their conversion they had led a very narrow and poor life, he was always moved to pity and compassion for them. Whence he asked them in those same words that as the Lord had gathered them together from many places into one, to holy charity, holy poverty, and holy obedience, so they should always live and die in them. And strictly did he warn them, that they should provide for their bodies discreetly out of the alms which the Lord should give to them, with joyfulness and giving of thanks; and especially that they should ever be patient in the labours which they sustained for their infirm sisters, and that the infirm themselves should be likewise patient in their infirmities.

SECTION VII

OF HIS CONTINUAL FERVOUR OF LOVE AND PASSION FOR THE PASSION OF CHRIST

CHAPTER XCI

AND FIRSTLY, HOW HE TOOK NO CARE OF HIS OWN INFIRMITIES ON ACCOUNT OF HIS LOVE OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST

So great was the fervour of love and compassion of blessed Francis for the pains and sufferings of Christ, and so much was he daily afflicted on account of that passion, within and without, that he took no care of his own infirmities. Whence, though for a long time, up to the day of his death, he had suffered ailments of the stomach and liver and spleen, and from the time when he returned from over-sea he had had very great pains of his eyes continually, yet he would not on that account take any pains to make himself be made whole. Whence my Lord of Ostia, seeing that he was and ever had been austere to his body, and especially as he had now begun to lose the light of his eyes; and because he would not be made whole, admonished him with great pity and compassion, saying, "Brother, you dost not well, because you dost not get thyself cured, though your life and health be very useful to friars and seculars, and the whole church. For if you hadst compassion on your infirm brethren, and were always pious and merciful to them, you should not be cruel to thyself in so great a necessity. For which reason I command you to cause thyself to be cured and assisted." (For that most holy Father ever took that which was bitter for sweet, because he drew immense sweetness from the humility and footsteps of the Son of God.)

CHAPTER XCII

HOW HE WAS FOUND GOING, LAMENTING IN A LOUD VOICE THE PASSION OF CHRIST

On a certain time a little after his conversion, when he was walking alone on the road not very far from the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, he went with a loud voice lamenting. But a certain spiritually-minded man met him, and fearing lest he had pain of some ailment, said to him, "What is the matter, Brother?" But he answered, "Thus I go through the world without shame, lamenting the Passion of my Lord." Then they both began to weep together, and shed many tears. This man we have known, and have learnt this from him, who also showed much consolation and mercy to the blessed man and to us his fellows.

CHAPTER XCIII

HOW THE JOYS WHICH HE SOMETIMES HAD WERE TURNED INTO TEARS

Drunken with the love and compassion of Christ, blessed Francis on a time did things such as these. For the most sweet melody of spirit boiling up within him frequently broke out in French speech and the veins of murmuring which he heard secretly with his ears, broke forth into French-like rejoicing. And sometimes he picked up a branch from the earth, and laying it on his left arm, he drew in his right hand another stick like a bow over it, as if on a viol or other instrument, and making fitting gestures, sang with it in French unto the Lord Jesus Christ. But all this playing ended in tears, and this joy dissolved in compassion for the Passion of Christ. In these times he would draw sighs continually; and with deep-drawn groans, forgetful of those things which he held in his hands, he was raised to Heaven.

SECTION VIII

OF HIS ZEAL FOR THE ORDER AND THE DIVINE WORK

CHAPTER XCIV

AND FIRSTLY, OF PRAYER AND THE DIVINE OFFICE

Though for many years he had been afflicted with the aforesaid infirmities, yet was he so devout and reverent at prayer and the Divine Office, that every time he was praying or repeating the canonical Hours, he would never lean on the wall or doorpost. For he generally stood erect and bareheaded, though he was sometimes on his knees; more especially because he spent the greater part of the day and the night in prayer; nay, when he went through the world afoot he always stayed his steps when he wished to say his Hours. But if he were riding, on account of his ailment, he always alighted to say the Office. On a certain time it was raining very much, and he was riding by reason of his infirmity and very great necessity, and though he was wholly soaked through, he got off the horse when he wished to say his Hours, and said his Office with as great a fervour of devotion and reverence thus, standing on the road with the rain falling on him continually, as if he had been in a church or a cell. And he said to his companion, "If the body wishes to eat its food in peace and quietness, when both are but the food of worms, with how much quiet and peace, with how great a reverence and devotion, should the mind receive that food which is God Himself."

CHAPTER XCV

HOW HE EVER LOVED SPIRITUAL GLADNESS IN HIMSELF AND OTHERS

The blessed Father ever used to have his highest and especial study in this, that apart from prayer and the Divine Office, he should continually have spiritual gladness; and

this likewise he singularly loved in his brethren, nay, he often reproved them for sadness and outward grief. For he used to say that "if the servant of God would study to preserve within and without the spiritual joy which comes of cleanness of heart and is acquired by devoutness of prayer, the demons would not be able to harm him, for they would say, 'Since this servant of God has joy in tribulation as in prosperity, we can find no way of entering to him nor of hurting him.' But the demons exult when they can quench or hinder in any way the devotion and joy which arises from prayer and other virtuous works. For if the devil may have aught of his own in the servant of God, except he be a wise man and solicitous to take away and destroy it as soon as possible by the virtue of holy prayer, contrition, confession, and satisfaction, in a short time he will make from one hair a beam to throw upon him. Since, therefore, my brethren, this spiritual joy comes of cleanness of heart and the purity of continual prayer, ye should be first and foremost desirous to acquire and conserve these two things, that ye may have, within and without, that joy which with the greatest longing I desire and wish to know and feel in you and myself, to the edification of our neighbours and the reproach of the enemy. For it pertains to him and to his members, to grow sad, but to you ever to rejoice and be glad in the Lord."

CHAPTER XCVI

HOW HE REPROVED HIS FELLOW WHO WAS SAD OF FACE, AND CONCERNING INTELLIGIBLE GLADNESS

The holy Father used to say, "Although I know the demons envy me the blessings which the Lord has given me; yet I know and see that they cannot hurt me by myself, and they intend and desire to hurt me by my fellows. But if they cannot harm me by myself, or by my fellows, they retire with great confusion. Nay, if I am sometimes tempted or full of

grief, when I perceive the gladness of my fellows immediately on account of their joy I return from my temptation and grief to my interior and exterior joy." On account of these things, the Father himself used often to blame those who made a show of sadness. For on a certain time he blamed one of his fellows who appeared sad of face, and said to him, "Why dost you make an outward show of sorrow and sadness for your offences? Keep you this sadness between you and your God, and pray to Him that by His mercy He may spare you, and restore to your soul the gladness of His salvation, which is taken away from you on account of sin; but before me and others, study always to have joy, for it befits not the servant of God to show before his brother or another sadness or a troubled face."

Not that it should be thought or believed that our Father, a lover of all gravity and decency, would have wished this gladness to be shown by laughing or by the least vain word; since by this not spiritual gladness but rather vanity and folly is shown; nay, he even singularly abhorred laughing and idle words in the servant of God; since not only did he wish that he should not laugh, but not even afford to others the slightest occasion for laughing. Whence in a certain admonition of his, he laid down more clearly what should be the joy of the servant of God. For he said, "Blessed is that Religious, who has no joy nor gladness except in the most holy words and works of the Lord, and with these provokes man to the love of the Lord in joy and gladness. And woe to that Religious who rejoices in idle and vain words, and with these provokes men to laughter."

By gladness of face, therefore, he understood fervour and solicitude and the disposition and preparation of mind and body to doing freely all good works, because by fervour and disposition of this kind others are more provoked sometimes than by the good deed itself; nay, if an act, however good,

does not seem to be done willingly and fervently, it rather causes disgust than provokes to good. And so he did not wish to see sadness in the face, which most often represents melancholy and indisposition of mind and idleness of body to all good. But he ever loved above all things gravity and maturity in face and in all the members of the body and the senses in himself and in others, and he induced others to do this as much as he could by word and example. For he had found out that gravity and modesty of manners of this kind was like a wall and a very strong shield against the shafts of the devil; and that the soul without the protection of this wall and shield was like a naked knight among very strong and well-furnished enemies, continually intent on his death.

CHAPTER XCVII

HOW FRIARS SHOULD SATISFY THE NECESSITIES OF THE BODY

Our most holy Father, considering that the body was created for the soul, and that bodily acts should be wrought on account of spiritual, used to say, "The servant of God, in eating and drinking and sleeping and satisfying the other necessities of the body, ought to satisfy his body with discretion, so that Brother Body may not be able to murmur against him, saying, 'I cannot stay erect and remain at prayer, nor rejoice in tribulations of the mind, nor work any other good works, because you do not satisfy my need.' For if the servant of God would satisfy his body with discretion and in a sufficiently good and fitting manner, and Brother Body should wish to be negligent and fat and sleepy in prayer, vigils, and good works, then he ought to punish it like a bad and fat beast for that he would eat and not be of profit, and bear a load. But if on account of want and poverty Brother Body cannot have his necessities in health and weakness, when he shall have humbly and honestly

asked it from his brother or from his prelate for the love of God, and it is not given to him; let him bear it patiently for the love of God, Who should console him, Who sought it and also found it not; and this necessity with patience shall be counted to him by the Lord for martyrdom. And because he has done that which was his to do (that is, has humbly asked his need), he shall be excused, even if his body were thence made sore feeble."

SECTION IX

OF CERTAIN TEMPTATIONS WHICH THE LORD PERMITTED TO HIM

CHAPTER XCVIII

AND FIRSTLY, HOW THE DEMON ENTERED A PILLOW WHICH HE HAD UNDER HIS HEAD

When blessed Francis was staying in the hermitage of Greccio for prayer in the last cell beyond the greater cell, on a certain ni*ht in his first slumber he called his fellow who was sleeping near him. And this fellow, rising, went to the door of the cell where the blessed man was sleeping. And the saint said to him, "Brother I have not been able to sleep this night, neither to stand erect at prayer, for my head and my legs tremble very much and it seems to me that I must have eaten some darnel bread." And when his fellow spoke to him in compassionate words, the holy man said, "But I believe that the devil is m that pillow which I have at my head." (For though he had never wished to sleep on feathers, or to have a feather pillow since he left the world; yet against his will the friars forced him to have that pillow then on account of the weakness of his eyes.) So he threw it to his fellow. His fellow, taking it, set it on his left shoulder, and when he had gone out of the porch of that cell forthwith

he lost his speech, and was not able to put down the' pillow or move his arms, but stood there erect, unable to move himself from that place, and feeling nothing in him. But when for some space of time he had stood thus, by the grace of God the holy Father called him; and immediately he returned to himself, letting the pillow fall behind his back. And when he had returned to the blessed man, he told him all things that had happened to him. And the saint said, "In the evening, when I was saying Complines, I felt the devil come into the cell whence I see that this devil is very astute, because when he could not hurt my soul, he wished to hinder the necessity of the body; so that I could not sleep nor stand erect at prayer, and that thus he would hinder the devotion and joy of my heart, and through this I should murmur at my infirmity."

CHAPTER XCIX

OF THE VERY GRAVE TEMPTATION WHICH HE HAD FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS

When he was staying in the dwelling of Saint Mary, a very grave temptation of spirit was sent to him for the profit of his soul. Thereby he was so much afflicted in mind and body that many times he drew himself away from the company of the friars, because he was not able to show himself joyful to them as he was accustomed. He afflicted himself nevertheless by abstinence from food and drink and words; and he prayed more instantly and shed tears more abundantly, that the Lord would be pleased to send to him a sufficient remedy in such a tribulation. But when he had been thus afflicted for more than two years, it happened on a certain day, while he was praying in the church of Saint Mary, that the word of the Gospel was spoken to him in his spirit: If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it

shall remove. Immediately the holy Father answered to Him, "Lord, what is that mountain?" And it was answered, "That mountain is your temptation." The holy Father said, "Therefore, Lord, it is done unto me as You have said." And immediately he was so perfectly set free, that it seemed to him that he had never had any temptations. Likewise in the holy mountain of Alverna, at the time when he received the stigmata of the Lord in his body, he suffered such trials and temptations from the demons that he was not able to show himself joyful to his brethren as he was used, and he used to say to his fellows, "If the friars knew how many and what afflictions the demons cause me, there is not one of them who would not be moved to compassion and pity on me."

CHAPTER C

OF THE TEMPTATION WHICH HE HAD THROUGH MICE, CONCERNING WHICH THE LORD CONSOLED HIM, CERTIFYING HIM OF HIS KINGDOM

Two years before his death, while he was at Saint Damian in a certain cell made of reeds, and was very greatly afflicted by the infirmity of his eyes, so that for more than sixty days he was not able to see the light of day, or even the light of the fire, it happened, by the Divine permission, that so many mice came into his cell for the increase of his affliction and of his merit, that they, running about over him in that cell by day and by night, allowed him neither to pray nor to remain quiet, nay, when he was eating they climbed up on his table, and worried him very much. Whence it appeared manifest both to himself and to his fellows, that it was a diabolical temptation. The blessed man therefore, seeing himself to be punished with so many afflictions, on a certain night, moved with compassion, said within himself, "Lord, look down on my infirmities in my help, that I may be able to bear them patiently." And immediately it was said to him in the spirit,

"Tell me, my brother, if any one should give to you for these your infirmities and tribulations so great and precious a treasure, that if the whole earth should be compared to it, it would be nothing in respect of that great treasure; would you not rejoice greatly?" And blessed Francis answered, "Lord, great would be that treasure and very precious, and much admirable and desirable." And he heard again One saying unto him, "Therefore, brother, rejoice and be glad in your infirmities and tribulations; and for the rest hold thyself as secure as if you wert now in My kingdom." And rising early, he said to his companion, "If the Emperor should give to any slave a whole kingdom; ought not that slave to rejoice greatly? If he should give his whole empire to him, ought he not much more to rejoice?" And he said to them, "Therefore I should rejoice greatly in my infirmities and tribulations, and be strong in the Lord, and always give thanks to God the Father and to His only Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, for such grace given me by the Lord, namely, that He has deigned to certify me His unworthy servant, yet living in the flesh, of His kingdom. Whence I wish to make to His praise and to our consolation and to the edification of our neighbour a new Praise of the Creatures of the Lord, which we daily use and without which we cannot live, and in whom the human race much offends their Creator; and we are continually ungrateful for so much grace and benefit, not praising God, the Creator and Giver of all things, as we ought. And sitting down, he began to meditate a little, and afterwards he said, "Most high, omnipotent good Lord," etc. And he sang a song over this, and taught his fellows to say and sing it. For his spirit was then in so great consolation and sweetness; that he wished to send for Brother Pacifico, who in the world used to be called the King of Verses, and was a truly courteous teacher of singers, and he wished some friars to be given to him that they should go together with him through the world preaching and singing praises of the Lord. For he said that

he wished that he who knew how to preach best among them should first preach to the people, and after the preaching they should all sing together the praises of the Lord like minstrels of the Lord. But when the praises were finished, he wished that the preacher should say to the people, "We are the minstrels of the Lord, and for these things we wish to be paid by you, that is, that you should remain in true penitence." And he said, "For what are the servants of the Lord but His minstrels, who should raise the hearts of men and move them to spiritual joy." And this he used to say specially of the Friars Minor, who were given to the people of God for their welfare.

SECTION X

OF THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

CHAPTER CI

AND FIRSTLY, HOW HE PREDICTED THAT PEACE WOULD BE MADE BETWEEN THE BISHOP AND PODESTA OF THE CITY OF ASSISI, WHEN THE CANTICLE WAS HEARD WHICH HE HAD MADE TO THE PRAISES OF THE CREATURES

After blessed Francis had composed the aforesaid Praises of the Creatures, which he called the "Canticle of Brother Sun" it happened that a great discord arose between the Bishop and the Podesta of the city of Assisi, so that the Bishop excommunicated the Podesta of the city, and the Podesta warned every one that no one should buy or sell anything with him, or make any contract with him.

Blessed Francis, although he was sick when he heard this, was moved with compassion on them, especially as no one interfered to make peace between them. And he said to his fellows, "It is great shame to us, servants of God, that the

Bishop and the Podesta should hate one another thus, and that no one should concern himself with their peace." And so he made immediately a verse in the aforesaid Praises on that occasion and said:

Be You praised, my Lord, of those who pardon for Your love and endure sickness and tribulations.

Blessed are they who will endure it in peace, for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Afterwards he called one of his fellows, and said to him, "Go to the Podesta and tell him on my part to go to the Bishop's palace with the magnates of the city and what others he may take with him." And when that brother had gone, he said to two others of his fellows, "Go and sing the Canticle of Brother Sun before the Bishop and the Podesta and the others who are with them, and I trust in the Lord that He will immediately humble their hearts, and they will return to their first love and friendship." But when they were all gathered together in the open court of the cloister of the Bishop's palace, those two friars arose, and one of them said, "Blessed Francis has made in his weakness the Praise of the Lord concerning his Creatures, to the praise of the said Lord, and the edification of his neighbour. Whence he asks of you that you should hear him with great devotion." And thus they began to speak and to sing. But the Podesta immediately rose and with joined hands and arms listened intently to those verses as to the Gospel of the Lord with very great devotion and even with many tears, for he had great faith and devotion to blessed Francis. When the Praises of the Lord were finished, the Podesta said before them all, "In truth, I say unto you, that not alone my Lord the Bishop, whom I wish and ought to have for my Lord, but if any one should have slain my blood-friend or my son I will forgive him," and so saying he threw himself at the feet of

the Bishop and said to him, "Behold, I am ready to make satisfaction for everything as it shall please you, for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His servant blessed Francis." But the Bishop taking him with his hands, raised him and said to him, "My office bids me be humble, yet because I am naturally prompt to wrath, it behoves that you should pardon me." And thus with much benignity and love they embraced and kissed each other. But the friars seeing what the blessed man had predicted of their concord fulfilled to the letter, were amazed and rejoiced. And all the others who were present held this for a very great miracle, ascribing the whole to the merits of the blessed man; because the Lord had so quickly visited them, and that they had turned away without the uttering of any word from such discord and scandal to such harmony. But we who were with the blessed Father bear testimony that when he said of any one, "thus it is," or, "thus it will be," always it happened thus to the letter. And we have seen so often and so much of this that it would be long to write or to tell it.

CHAPTER CII

HOW HE FORESAW THE FALL OF A FRIAR UNWILLING TO CONFESS UNDER AN APPEARANCE OF SILENCE

There was a certain friar outwardly of honest and holy conversation, who by day and night seemed solicitous concerning prayer, and in such wise observed continual silence, that sometimes when he would confess to the priest he used to confess by signs only and not by words. For he seemed so devout and fervent in the love of God that sometimes sitting with his brethren even though he did not speak, yet he rejoiced greatly within and without on hearing such good words, so that from this he drew other friars to devotion. But when he had remained some years in this kind of life, it happened that blessed Francis came to the

habitation where he was staying. Who, when he heard from the friars his conversation, said to them, "Know in truth that it is because of a diabolical temptation that he does not wish to confess." In the meantime the Minister-General came there to visit the holy man and began to commend that one to the blessed man. And the blessed one said to him, "Believe me, brother, that friar, since he is led by an evil spirit, will be deceived." The Minister-General said, "It seems strange to me, and almost incredible, that this could be of a man who has so many signs and works of holiness." And the holy man said to him, "Prove him," saying to the friar, "Brother, I wish that you should confess twice in a week." But he placed his finger over his mouth, shaking his head and showing by signs that he did not wish to do this for the love of silence. But the Minister, fearing to scandalise him, let him go. And not many days after, that friar left the Order of his own will, and returned to the world, wearing the secular dress.

But so it was, that while on a day two of the companions of the blessed man were walking by a certain road, they came upon him walking alone like a very poor pilgrim. And having compassion on him, they said, "Oh wretched one, where is your honest and holy conversation? For you wast unwilling to speak and to show thyself to your brethren, and now you goest wandering through the world, like a man ignorant of God." But he began to speak to them, swearing often "by his faith," like the men of this world. And they said to him, "Wretched man, why dost you swear by your faith like lay-folk, you who was wont to be silent, not only from idle words, but from all speech?" And so they left him, and a little after he died. And we wondered greatly, seeing what blessed Francis had predicted of him in the time when the wretched one was reputed a saint by the friars to be true to the letter.

CHAPTER CIII

OF A CERTAIN MAN WHO WEPT BEFORE THE BLESSED FRANCIS THAT HE MIGHT BE RECEIVED INTO THE ORDER

At the time when no one was received into the Order except by the leave of the blessed man; the son of a noble citizen of Lucca with many others, wishing to enter the Order, came to blessed Francis, who was then sick in the palace of the Bishop of Assisi. And when they all presented themselves to the blessed man, he bowed down before him and began to weep greatly, begging him to receive him. The blessed Father looking upon him said to him, "Oh wretched and carnal man; why dost you lie to the Holy Spirit and to me? You weepest carnally and not spiritually." And as these things were said, his relations came on horseback outside the palace, wishing to take him away, and carry him off by force. But he, hearing the noise of the horses, looked through a window and saw his kinsmen and straightway went down to them, and as the blessed man had foreseen, returned to the world with them.

CHAPTER CIV

OF THE VINEYARD OF THE PRIEST SPOILED ON ACCOUNT OF BLESSED FRANCIS

Blessed Francis abode a while by reason of the weakness of his eyes at the church of Saint Fabian, which is near Rieti, with a poor priest. For my Lord Pope Honorius was then at that city with all his court; whence many Cardinals and other great clerks used to visit blessed Francis almost daily, on account of the devotion which they had towards him. Now that church had a little vineyard next the house in which the blessed Francis was: and in that house was a door by which well-nigh all who visited him entered the vineyard, especially as the grapes were then ripe and the place was very pleasant; so that for that reason the whole vineyard

was stripped and spoiled of its grapes. On account of which that priest began to be scandalised, saying, "Though it was a small vineyard, yet I used to collect thence as much wine as was sufficient for my need, and behold I have lost it all for this year!" Hearing which blessed Francis made him to be called and said to him: "Be not any further disturbed, because we cannot do anything else now. But trust in the Lord, since He is able to make up your loss by His servant to you in full. Tell me, how many measures of wine you hadst, when you hadst most from your vineyard?" The priest answered, "Father, thirteen measures." Blessed Francis said to him, "Be no more sad, nor say any injurious word to any one on account of this, but have faith in the Lord and in my word, and if you have less than twenty measures of wine I will cause it to be made up to you." And from that time forward the priest held his tongue and was quiet, and in the time of the vintage he had from that vineyard twenty measures of wine and not less. And all those who heard this wondered greatly, saying that if the vineyard had been full of grapes it would have been impossible that there should have been twenty measures of grapes there. But we who were with him bear testimony that what he said of this and of all things was fulfilled to the letter.

CHAPTER CV

OF THE KNIGHTS OF PERUGIA WHO HINDERED HIS PREACHING

While blessed Francis was preaching in the place of Perugia to a great crowd of people congregated there, behold, some knights of Perugia began to run through the place on horseback and hinder his preaching. And though they were reproved by those who were present, yet they did not cease on account of this. Therefore the holy Father, turning towards them, said to them with fervour of spirit, "Hear and

understand what the Lord announces to you by me the least of His servants, nor say, 'this man is of Assisi.'" (But this he said, because there is an old hatred between them of Perugia and the men of Assisi.) And he said to them, "The Lord has exalted you over all your neighbours, on account of which ye ought rather to recognise your Creator by humiliating yourself not only to God but also to your neighbours. But your heart is lifted up in pride, and ye lay waste your neighbours and slay many of them. Wherefore I say unto you, that unless ye be quickly converted to God, satisfying those whom ye have offended, the Lord, Who leaves nothing unpunished, will cause you to rise one against the other to your shame, for your greater vengeance and punishment, and, moved by sedition and internal war, ye shall suffer greater tribulation than your neighbours could bring upon you." (For thus the holy Father never held his peace on the faults of the people, when he used to preach, but reproved them all, publicly and manfully. But the Lord gave so much grace to him, that all, of whatever state and condition they were, who saw and heard him, feared and venerated him on account of the abundant grace of God which he had; so that however often they were reproved by him they were always edified by his words, and were converted to the Lord or inwardly struck with penitence.) And so it was, by divine permission, that a few days after a dissension arose between the knights and the people, so that the people turned the knights out of the city, and the knights, with the Church which assisted them, laid waste their fields and vineyards and trees, and did all the evil which they could do to the people. And the people likewise destroyed all the goods of the knights. And so, according to the word of the blessed man, the people and the knights were punished.

CHAPTER CVI

HOW HE FORESAW THE HIDDEN TEMPTATIONS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A CERTAIN FRIAR

A certain friar, right spiritual and familiar with the blessed man, had suffered for many days most grievous suggestions of the devil, so that he was like to fall into the depths of despair, and every day he was so tormented that he was ashamed to confess so often, and afflicted himself greatly for this reason by fasting, vigil, tears, and disciplines. And it happened, by the divine dispensation, that blessed Francis went to that place. And while on a certain day that friar was walking with the blessed man, blessed Francis knew through the Holy Spirit his tribulation and temptation, and drawing himself a little apart from the friar who was walking with him, he turned to that afflicted brother and said to him, "Dearest brother, I will that henceforth you shalt not feel thyself bound to confess these diabolical suggestions. And fear not, for nothing shall hurt your soul. But, with my leave, you shall say seven Paternoster? as often as you are troubled by them." And that brother rejoiced greatly at the words which he had said to him (namely, that he should not be bound to confess these temptations), for he had been greatly afflicted by this. Nevertheless he was greatly stupefied, seeing that blessed Francis knew that which was known only by the priest to whom it had been confessed. And immediately he was set free from that tribulation by the grace of God and the merits of Saint Francis; and from that time forward remained in great peace and quiet. (And it was because the saint had hoped this, that he had securely absolved him from confession.)

CHAPTER CVII

OF THOSE THINGS WHICH HE FORETOLD OF BROTHER BERNARD, WHICH WERE AFTERWARDS FULFILLED AS HE HAD PREDICTED

When near his death a certain dainty dish was prepared for him, he remembered Brother Bernard who was the first friar that he had, and said to his companions, "This dish is good for Brother Bernard," and forthwith he made him be called to him. Who, when he had come, sat near the bed whereon the saint was sitting. And Brother Bernard said, "Father, I ask you that you should bless me, and show me your benediction; for if you should show me your paternal benediction, I believe that God Himself and all men will love me more." But the blessed man was not able to see him, because he had lost the light of his eyes for many days before. But stretching out his right hand he placed it on the head of Brother Giles who was the third friar, believing that he had put it on the head of Brother Bernard, who was sitting next to him. And immediately knowing it by the Holy Spirit, he said, "This is not the head of my brother Bernard." Then Brother Bernard drew nearer, and the blessed Father putting his hand on his head blessed him, saying to one of his fellows, "Write what I say to thee: Bernard was the first friar, who first began and completed the most perfect perfection of the Holy Gospel, by distributing his goods to the poor: on account of which, and on account of many other prerogatives, I am bound to love him more than any other friar of the whole Order. Whence I will and command as far as I am able, that whoever shall be Minister-General should love and honour him as myself. But let the Minister and all friars of the whole Order hold him as myself." And with this Brother Bernard and the other friars were greatly consoled. For the blessed Father, considering the very great perfection of that Brother Bernard, had prophesied before certain friars, saying, "I say unto you that some of the great and most subtle demons are allotted to Brother Bernard for his warfare, who shall bring many tribulations and temptations upon him. But the merciful Lord will take away from him near his end all tribulation and temptation, and will set his spirit in such peace and consolation, that all friars who shall

see these things shall wonder greatly and shall hold it for a great miracle; and in that quiet and consolation of soul and body he shall pass away to the Lord."

But all these things, not without very great wonder of all the friars who heard these things from the blessed Father, were afterwards fulfilled to the letter in that brother Bernard. For Brother Bernard in the bitterness of death was in so much peace and consolation of spirit that he was unwilling to lie down. And if he lay down, he lay as if sitting, nor even the slightest humour ascending to his head was able to hinder meditation concerning God, through sleep or any imagination. And if this in any way happened, immediately he rose up and struck himself, saying, "What was it? Why did I thus think?" He wished to take no medicine, but said to him that offered it, "Do not hinder me." And thenceforward, that he might more freely and peacefully die, he put all the duties of his body in the hands of a certain brother who was a physician, saying to him, "I wish to have no care of eating or drinking, but I commit them to thee; if you givest I will take, if you dost not give I will not ask." But when he began to grow weak, he wished to have near him a priest unto the hour of his death, and when anything came into his mind which burdened his conscience, he confessed it immediately. But after his death, his body became white and soft, and he seemed to smile. Whence he was fairer dead than alive; and all rejoiced more to look upon him dead than alive, for he seemed rightly "a smiling saint."

CHAPTER CVIII

HOW WHEN NEAR HIS DEATH HE PROMISED TO BLESSED CLARE THAT SHE SHOULD SEE HIM, AND HOW AFTER HIS DEATH IT WAS FULFILLED

In that week in which blessed Francis passed away, the lady Clare, the first offshoot of the poor sisters of Saint Damian of Assisi, the foremost rival of the holy man in preserving Evangelical Perfection, fearing to die before him, because both were then sore sick, wept most bitterly and would not be consoled, for that she thought that she should not see before her death blessed Francis, her consoler and master and her first founder in the grace of God, and therefore she signified this by a certain friar to the blessed Father. Hearing which the saint was moved with compassion, for he loved her singularly with fatherly affection. But considering that that could not be which she wished (that is to see him), he wrote to her by letters for the consolation of her and all her sisters his benediction; and absolved her from all defect, if she had been guilty of any, against the admonition and against the mandates and counsels of the Son of God; and that she should lay aside all sadness and sorrow, he said to that friar whom she had sent, "Go and bid sister Clare put aside all sorrow and sadness on account of not being able to see me. But let her know in truth that before her death, she and her sisters shall see me, and shall be much consoled concerning me." But so it was, that when a little later blessed Francis passed away in the night, there came early the whole of the people and clergy of the town of Assisi, and bore his holy body from the place where he had died, with hymns and praises, carrying each of them branches of trees, and thus they bore him, by the will of God, to Saint Damian, that the word might be performed which the Lord had said through blessed Francis to console His daughters and His handmaids. And having moved the iron grating by which they were accustomed to communicate and hear the Word of God, the friars took the holy body from the bier, and held it between their arms to the window for a great space; until lady Clare and her sisters were consoled concerning him, though they were full and stricken with many sorrows and

tears, seeing themselves deprived of the consolations and admonitions of such a father.

CHAPTER CIX

HOW HE FORETOLD THAT HIS BODY WOULD BE HONOURED AFTER HIS DEATH

On a certain day when he was lying ailing in the Bishop's palace at Assisi, a certain spiritually-minded friar said to him, as if in sport, and smiling, "For how much wouldst you sell to the Lord all your sack-cloths? Many baldachinos and silken palls shall be placed over this little body of thine, which now is clothed with sackcloth." For then he was bandaged with sack-cloth, and had a garment also of sackcloth. And blessed Francis answered (but not he but the Holy Spirit through him) and said, with great fervour and joy of spirit, "You say truth, since so it will be for the praise and grace of my God."

SECTION XI

OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE CONCERNING HIM

CHAPTER CX

AND FIRSTLY, HOW THE LORD PROVIDED FOR THE FRIARS SITTING AT A POOR TABLE WITH THE PHYSICIAN

When blessed Francis was at the hermitage of Fonte Palumbo near Rieti, on account of the weakness of his eyes there visited him on a certain day an eye-doctor. When he had stayed with him for some time and now wished to depart, the blessed Father said to one of his companions, "Go and give the doctor something of the best to eat." And his fellow answered him, saying, "Father, we say it with shame, we are so poor that we should be ashamed to invite

him now to eat." Blessed Francis said to his companion, "ye of little faith, say no more to me of it." And the doctor said to blessed Francis, "Brother, for that the friars are poor, I will the more willingly eat with them." For that physician was very rich. And though the blessed Father and his fellows had often invited him, yet he had never wished to eat there. Therefore the friars went and prepared the table; and with shame set thereon a little bread and wine, and some cabbage which they had got ready for themselves. And sitting down to that poor table they had begun to eat, when behold there was a knock at the door of the dwelling. So one of the friars, rising, went to open the door. And behold, there was a certain woman there, carrying a great vessel full of good bread and fishes, and crayfish patties, and honey, and grapes; which the lady of a castle about seven miles off had sent to blessed Francis. Having seen which, the friars and the doctor rejoiced greatly, considering the sanctity of the holy Father, and ascribing all to his merits. And the doctor said to the friars, "My brethren, neither you nor we know as we ought the holiness of this man!"

CHAPTER CXI

OF THE FISH WHICH HE DESIRED IN HIS INFIRMITY

On another time when he was grievously sick in the palace of the Bishop of Assisi, the friars besought him to eat. And he answered, "I have no will to eat; but if I could have some of the fish called squail, perhaps I could eat it." And as he said this, behold, some one came carrying a wicker basket in which there were three great squails well prepared, and some crayfish, which the holy Father did willingly eat. And this, Brother Gerard, the Minister of Rieti, had sent to him. And they praised God for the divine providence, Who had provided for His servant those things which were impossible to be had then at Assisi, since it was winter.

CHAPTER CXII

OF THE FOOD AND CLOTH WHICH HE DESIRED AT HIS DEATH

When he was ailing in the habitation of Saint Mary of the Angels with the last sickness by which he died, on a certain day he called his fellow to him, saying, "You know how the lady Jacqueline of Settesoli was and is very faithful and devoted to our Order. And therefore I believe that she will hold it for a great grace and consolation if you would signify my state to her, and send specially to her to send me some religious garments in colour like to ashes, and that with the cloth she should send also some of that sweetmeat which she has often made for me in the City." But the Romans call that sweetmeat mostaccioli, which is made of almonds and sugar and other things. For that lady was truly spiritual, and one of the richest and best-born widows of all Rome: who, by the merits and preaching of blessed Francis, had received so much grace from the Lord, that she seemed like another Magdalene, ever full of tears and devotion for the love and sweetness of Christ. They wrote therefore a letter as the holy man said, and a certain friar went seeking some brother to carry the letter to the aforesaid lady. And immediately there was a knock at the door of the habitation. And when the door was opened by a friar, behold the lady Jacqueline was there, who had come in great haste to visit blessed Francis; and with great pleasure he told him how lady Jacqueline had come from Rome, with her son, and many others, to visit him. And he said, "What shall we do, Father? Shall we allow her to enter and come to thee?" (But this he said, because it had been ordered that at that place, with the will of Saint Francis, no woman should enter, on account of the great seemliness and devotion of it.) And the holy Father said, "This rule is not to be observed with that Lady, seeing that her great faith and devotion has made her come hither from

distant parts." The dame entered therefore to the blessed man, shedding many tears before him. And behold a wonder! She brought a shroud cloth (that is, of ashen colour) for a tunic, and all the things which were contained in the letter she had fetched with her, as if she had received it. And the dame said to the friars, "My brethren, it was said unto me in the spirit when I was praying, "Go and visit your Father, blessed Francis, and delay not, for if you delay much, you wilt not find him alive; and carry with you such a cloth for a tunic, and such and such things; and you shalt make him that sweetmeat. Take with you likewise a great quantity of wax for lights, and also of incense." (But this was not contained in the letter that should have been sent.) And thus it was that He Who inspired kings to go with gifts to honour His Son in the time of His nativity, inspired also that noble and holy lady to go with gifts to honour His most beloved servant in the day of his death, nay, of his true birth. That lady, therefore, prepared the dish of which the holy Father had desired to eat. But he ate little thereof, because he grew continually weaker, and drew nearer to death. She caused also many candles to be made which should burn after his death before his most holy body. But of the cloth, the friars made for him a tunic, in which he was buried. But he himself ordered the friars to sew a sack over him, in token and in example of humility and Lady Poverty. And in that week in which dame Jacqueline came, our most holy Father passed away to the Lord.

SECTION XII

OF HIS LOVE FOR CREATURES AND OF CREATURES FOR HIM

CHAPTER CXIII

AND FIRSTLY, OF THE LOVE WHICH HE ESPECIALLY HAD FOR THE BIRDS WHICH ARE CALLED LARKS

Blessed Francis, wholly wrapped up in the love of God, discerned perfectly the goodness of God not only in his own soul, now adorned with the perfection of virtue, but in every creature. On account of which he had a singular and intimate love of creatures, especially of those in which was figured anything pertaining to God or the Order. Whence above all other birds he loved a certain little bird which is called the lark, or by the people, the cowled lark. And he used to say of it, "Sister Lark hath a cowl like a Religious; and she is a humble bird, because she goes willingly by the road to find there any food. And if she comes upon it in foulness, she draws it out and eats it. But flying she praises God very sweetly like a good Religious, despising earthly things, whose conversation is always in the heavens, and whose intent is always to the praise of God. Her clothes are like to the earth (that is her feathers), and she gives an example to Religious that they should not have delicate and coloured garments, but vile in price and colour, as earth is viler than the other elements." And because he perceived this in them, he looked on them most willingly. Therefore it pleased the Lord, that these most holy little birds should show some sign of affection towards him in the hour of his death. For late in the Sabbath day, after vespers, before the night in which he passed away to the Lord, a great multitude of that kind of birds called larks came on the roof of the house where he was lying; and flying about, made a wheel like a circle round the roof, and sweetly singing, seemed likewise to praise the Lord.

CHAPTER CXIV

HOW HE WISHED TO PERSUADE THE EMPEROR TO MAKE A LAW THAT MEN SHOULD MAKE A GOOD PROVISION FOR BIRDS AND OXEN AND ASSES AND THE POOR AT CHRISTMAS TIME

We, who were with blessed Francis, and have written these things, bear testimony that many times we have heard him say, "If I were to speak to the Emperor, I would, supplicating and persuading him, tell him for the love of God and me to make a special law that no man should take or kill sister Larks, nor do them any harm. Likewise, that all the Podestas of the towns, and the Lords of castles and villages, should be bound every year on Christmas day to compel men to throw wheat and other grains outside the cities and castles, that our sister Larks may have something to eat, and also the other birds, on a day of such solemnity. And that for the reverence of the Son of God, Who rested on that night with the most blessed Virgin Mary between an Ox and an Ass in the manger, whoever shall have an Ox and an Ass shall be bound to provide for them on that night the best of good fodder. Likewise on that day, all poor men should be satisfied by the rich with good food." For the blessed Father had a greater reverence for Christmas day than for any other festival, saying, "Since the Lord had been born for us, it behooves us to be saved," and on account of which he wished that on that day every Christian should rejoice in the Lord; and for His love who gave Himself for us, that all should provide largely not only for the poor, but also for the animals and birds.

CHAPTER CXV

OF THE OBEDIENCE OF THE FIRE TO HIM, WHEN HE WAS CAUTERISED

When he came to the hermitage of Fonte Palumbo near Rieti, for the cure of his ailment of the eyes, to which cure he had been forced by obedience to my Lord of Ostia, and by Brother Elias, the Minister-General, on a certain day the physician came to him, who, considering the disease, said to blessed Francis that he would make a cautery over the jaw

up to the eyebrow of that eye which was weaker than the other. But blessed Francis was unwilling to begin the cure unless Brother Elias was there; because he had said that he wished to be present when the physician began that operation, and because he himself feared, and it was grave to him, to have so much solicitude for himself; and so he wished that the Minister-General should cause all to be done. When therefore they had waited for him, and he did not come, on account of the many impediments which he had, at last he permitted the physician to do what he would. And having placed the iron in the fire to make the cautery, blessed Francis, wishing to strengthen his spirit, lest he should faint, spoke thus to the fire, "My Brother Fire, noble and useful among all other creatures, be kindly to me in this hour, because formerly I have loved you for the love of Him Who created you. But I pray our Creator Who created us, that He will so temper your heat that I may be able to sustain it." And the prayer finished, he signed the fire with the sign of the cross. But we who were with him then did all flee, out of pity and compassion for him, and the physician alone remained with him. But when the cautery was made we returned to him, who said to us, "cowards, and of little faith, why did you fly? In truth I say unto you, that I have felt neither any pain nor the heat of the fire; nay, if it be not well burnt now, let him burn it better." And the physician marvelled greatly, saying, "My brethren, I say unto you that I should fear not only for him who is so weak and ailing, but for even the strongest man, lest he should not be able to suffer so great a cautery. But this man neither moved nor showed the least sign of pain." For all the veins from the ear to the eyebrow had to be cut open, and it did him no good. Likewise another physician bored through both his ears with a red-hot iron, and it benefited him nothing. Nor is it strange, if the fire and the other creatures were obedient to him and venerated him, for, as we who were with him have very often seen, he was so much drawn to them, and

rejoiced in them so much, and his spirit was moved with so much pity and compassion for them, that he would not see them badly treated, and he used to speak with them with inward gladness, as if they had reason, whence by their occasion, he was ofttimes wrapt up to God.

CHAPTER CXVI

THAT HE WOULD NOT QUENCH THE FIRE THAT HAD BURNT HIS HOSE

Among all the lower and insensible creatures he was singularly drawn to fire on account of its beauty and use, wherefore he never wished to hinder its office. For on a time, when he was sitting next the fire, without his knowledge it caught hold of his linen clothes or hosen near the knee. When he felt the heat of the fire he did not wish to put it out. But his fellow seeing his clothes burn, ran to him wishing to quench the fire. But he forbade him, saying, "Nay, dearest brother, harm not the fire," and thus he would by no means let him quench it.

Then he hurriedly went to the friar who was his Warden, and led him to blessed Francis, and straightway, against the will of the blessed Father, put out the fire. For whatever necessity urged him, he would never extinguish a fire or a lamp or a candle, with so much pity was he moved towards it. Also he would not that a friar should throw out fire or smoking wood from place to place, as is wont to be done; but they should simply set it on the ground, on account of the reverence for Him of Whom it is the creature.

CHAPTER CXVII

HOW HE WOULD NOT WEAR A SKIN BECAUSE HE HAD NOT PERMITTED IT TO BE BURNT WITH FIRE

When he was keeping Lent in Mont Alverna, on a certain day his fellow at the hour of eating prepared a fire in the cell where he was used to eat. And when the fire was alight he went to another cell for the blessed man, where he was praying, carrying with him the Missal that he might read the Gospel for that day to him, for he always wished to hear the Gospel which was read for the Mass of that day before he ate, when he was not able to hear Mass. And when he came to that cell where the fire was alight, behold, the flame of the fire had ascended to the roof and was burning it. But his fellow as he was able began to put out the fire, but could not do it alone. However, holy Francis was unwilling to help him; yet he took up a certain skin which he wore over him at night and went away with it to the wood. But the friars of the place, who dwelt far from that cell, when they learnt that it was being burnt, immediately came and extinguished the fire. Afterwards blessed Francis returned to meat, and when he had eaten he said to his fellow, "I will not have that skin over me again, since by reason of my avarice I would not that Brother Fire should eat it."

CHAPTER CXVIII

OF HIS LOVE FOR WATER AND STONES AND WOOD AND FLOWERS

After fire, he most singularly loved water, by which is figured holy penitence and tribulation, whereby the filth of the soul is washed away, and because the first ablution of the soul is by the water of baptism. Whence, when he washed his hands, he used to choose such a place that the water which fell should not be trodden by his feet; when he would walk over stones, moreover, he used to walk with great fear and reverence, for the love of Him Who is called "The Rock." Whence when he used to say that verse of the Psalm, You didst exalt me on a rocky he used to say, out of his great

reverence and devotion, "Under the foot of the rock have you exalted me." He used also to say to the friar who made ready the wood for the fire, that he should never cut down a whole tree; but so that always some part of a tree should remain whole for the love of Him Who did work out our salvation on the wood of the cross. Likewise he used to say to the friar who did the garden, not to till the whole ground for pot-herbs; but to leave some part of it to produce green herbs, which in their time should produce flowers for the friars, for the love of Him Who is called the "flower of the field" and "the lily of the valley." Nay, he used to say to that brother gardener that he ought always to make a fair pleasaunce in some part of the garden; setting and planting there all sweet-smelling herbs and all herbs which bring forth fair flowers, that in their time they might call them that looked upon those herbs and flowers to the praise of God. For every creature cries aloud, "God made me for you, man!" Whence we who were with him used to see him rejoice, within and without, as it were, in all things created; so that touching or seeing them his spirit seemed to be not on earth but in heaven. And by reason of the many consolations which he used to have in things created, a little before his death he composed certain Praises of the Lord for His creatures, to incite the hearts of those who should hear them to the praise of God, and that the Lord Himself might be praised by men in His creatures.

CHAPTER CXIX

HOW HE USED TO COMMEND THE SUN AND FIRE ABOVE ALL OTHER CREATED THINGS

Above all other creatures wanting reason, he loved the sun and fire with most affection. For he was wont to say, "In the morning when the sun rises, every man ought to praise God, Who created it for our use, because through it our eyes are

enlightened by day. Then in the even when it becomes night, every man ought to give praise on account of Brother Fire, by which our eyes are enlightened by night; for we be all as it were blind, and the Lord by these two, our brothers, doth enlighten our eyes. And therefore we ought specially to praise the Creator Himself for these and the other creatures which we daily use." The which he himself always did to the day of his death, nay, when he was struck down with great infirmity he begun to sing the Praises of the Lord which he had made concerning created things, and afterwards he made his fellows sing, so that in considering the praise of the Lord, he might forget the bitterness of his pains and infirmities. And because he deemed and said that the sun is fairer than other created things, and is more often likened to our Lord, and that in Scripture the Lord Himself is called "the Sun of Righteousness," therefore giving that name to those Praises which he had made of the creatures of the Lord, what time the Lord did certify him of His kingdom, he called them "The Song of Brother Sun."

CHAPTER CXX

THIS IS THE PRAISE OF CREATED THINGS, WHICH HE MADE WHEN THE LORD CERTIFIED HIM OF HIS KINGDOM

Most High, Omnipotent, Good Lord.

Thine be the praise, the glory, the honour, and all benediction.
To You alone, Most High, they are due,
and no man is worthy to mention You.

I Be You praised, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
above all Brother Sun,
who gives the day and lightens us therewith.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
of You, Most High, he bears similitude.

Be You praised, my Lord, of Sister Moon and the stars,
in the heaven have You formed them, clear and precious and comely.

Be You praised, my Lord, of Brother Wind,
and of the air, and the cloud, and of fair and of all weather,
by the which You give to Your creatures sustenance.

Be You praised, my Lord, of Sister Water,
which is much useful and humble and precious and pure.

Be You praised, my Lord, of Brother Fire,
by which You have lightened the night,
and he is beautiful and joyful and robust and strong.

Be You praised, my Lord, of our Sister Mother Earth,
which sustains and hath us in rule,
and produces divers fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Be You praised, my Lord, of those who pardon for Your love
and endure sickness and tribulations.

Blessed are they who will endure it in peace,
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Be You praised, my Lord, of our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no man living may escape,
woe to those who die in mortal sin:

Blessed are they who are found in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall not work them ill.

Praise ye and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks,
and serve Him with great humility.

SECTION XIII

OF HIS DEATH, AND OF THE GLADNESS WHICH HE SHOWED WHEN HE FIRST KNEW FOR CERTAIN THAT HE WAS NEAR DEATH

CHAPTER CXXI

AND FIRSTLY, HOW HE ANSWERED BROTHER ELIAS WHEN HE REBUKED HIM FOR THIS

When he was lying sick in the palace of the Bishopric of Assisi and the hand of the Lord did seem to be more than of wont heavy upon him, the people of Assisi, fearing lest if he should die by night the friars would bear away his holy body to another city, ordered that every night ward should be diligently kept in the circuit outside the wall of the palace. But the most holy Father himself, that he might comfort his spirit lest it should at any time give way by reason of the violence of the pain by which he was daily and continually afflicted, made the Praises of the Lord to be sung by his companions often in the day, and thus he did also in the night, for the edification and consolation of the lay-folk who were keeping watch in the palace. But Brother Elias, considering that blessed Francis thus comforted himself in the Lord and rejoiced in the midst of such sickness, said to him, "Dearest brother, I am greatly consoled and edified by all the gladness which you show, for you and your fellows in thine ailments. But though the men of this city venerate you as a holy man, yet for that they believe firmly that you art nigh unto death because of thine incurable sickness, hearing these Praises sung by day and night, they may say within themselves, 'Why doth this man show such

lightheartedness, who is near death? He ought to be thinking of death.'" Blessed Francis said to him, "Dost you remember when you didst see the vision at Foligno, and didst tell me that a certain man had said unto you that I should not live more than two years; before that vision you saw how, by the grace of God Who suggests all good things to the heart and puts it in the mouth of His faithful, I used often to consider my end, both by day and by night; but from that hour in which you hadst seen the vision, I was more solicitous to daily consider the day of my death." And straightway he said with great fervour of spirit, "Suffer me, brother, to rejoice in the Lord, both in His praises and in my infirmities; since by the grace of the Holy Spirit helping me, I am so united and joined to my Lord, that by His mercy may I well rejoice in the Most High."

CHAPTER CXXII

HOW HE INDUCED THE PHYSICIAN TO TELL HIM HOW LONG HE SHOULD LIVE

In those days there visited him in the same palace a certain physician of Arezzo, by name Good John, who was very familiar with blessed Francis. And blessed Francis questioned him, saying, "What think you, Bembenignate, of this my infirmity of dropsy?" For he would not call him by his name; for that he would never name anybody who was called "Good," out of reverence to the Lord, Who said, There is none good but one, that is God. Likewise he would never call any one "father" or "master," nor write it in his letters, out of reverence to the Lord, Who said, And call no one man father on earth nor be ye called masters, etc. And the physician said to him, "Brother, it shall be well with you, by the grace of God." And blessed Francis said again, "Tell me the truth; what do you think? Fear not, since by the grace of God I am no faint-heart that I should fear death. For by the

grace of the Holy Spirit, I am so made one with my Lord, that I am equally content with death as with life." Then the physician said to him openly, "Father, according to our medicine-craft thine infirmity is incurable, and I believe that either in the end of September or on the fourth of the Nones of October, you wilt die." Then blessed Francis, lying on his bed, spread his hands out to the Lord with very great devotion and reverence, and said with great joy of mind and body, "Welcome, my Sister Death."

CHAPTER CXXIII

THAT STRAIGHTWAY, WHEN HE HEARD THAT HE SHOULD DIE SO SOON, HE CAUSED THE PRAISES WHICH HE HAD MADE TO BE SUNG TO HIM

After these things a certain friar said to him, "Father, your life and conversation was and is a light and a mirror, not only to your brethren, but also to the whole Church, and your death shall be the same. And though your death will be a matter of sadness and grief to your brethren, and to many others, yet it will be to you consolation and infinite joy. For you shalt pass from great labour to the greatest rest, from many pains and temptations to eternal peace, from the earthly poverty which you have ever loved and perfectly observed to endless true riches, and so from temporal death to perpetual life, where you shalt see your Lord God face to face, Whom you have loved in this life with so much fervour and desire." And having said these things, he said openly to him, "Father, you know in truth except the Lord should send you His medicine from heaven thine infirmity is incurable, and you have little longer to live, as the physicians but now foretold you. Now I have said this to you, that your spirit may be made strong, and that you mayst rejoice in the Lord within and without, so that your brethren and the others who visit you may find you always rejoicing in the Lord, and

that to those who see, and to others who hear it after your death, your death may be a perpetual memorial, as your life and conversation was and ever shall be." Then blessed Francis, even though his infirmities were more than usually heavy upon him, was seen from these words to derive a new joy to his mind, hearing that Sister Death threatened him so nearly, and with great fervour of spirit he praised the Lord, saying to him, "Therefore, if it pleases my Lord that I must quickly die, call to me Brother Angelo and Brother Leo, that they may sing to me of Sister Death." And when those two brethren had come to him, they sang, with many tears, the "Song of Brother Sun," and of the other created things of the Lord, which the saint himself had made. And then before the last verse of the Canticle he added some verses of Sister Death, saying:

Be You praised, my Lord, of our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no man living can escape,
woe to those who die in mortal sin:

Blessed are they who are found in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall not work them ill.

Praise ye, and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks,
and serve Him with great humility.

CHAPTER CXXIV

HOW HE BLESSED THE CITY OF ASSISI WHEN HE WAS BEING CARRIED TO SAINT MARY THEREAT TO DIE

Now when the most holy Father was made certain, as much by the Holy Spirit, as by the sentence of the physician, that his death was near, seeing that up to then he had been in the palace, and feeling that he grew continually worse, and that the forces of his body were leaving him, he made

himself be carried in his bed to Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, that there he might finish the life of his body, where he had begun to find the light and life of his soul. But when those who were carrying him had come to the Hospice which is in the midst of the way by which one goes from Assisi to Saint Mary, he bade his bearers lay down the bed on the ground. And though on account of his long and very great disease of the eyes, he was not able to see it, he made his bed be turned so that he should hold his face towards Assisi. And raising himself a little in his bed, he blessed the city, saying, "Lord, like as this city of old was, as I believe, a place and a habitation of wicked men, so I see that on account of the abundance of Your mercy, in the time which hath pleased You, You have singularly shown it the multitude of Your mercies. On account of Your goodness alone, You have chosen it to Yourself, that it might be the place and habitation of those who should know You in truth, and should give glory to Your Holy Name, and should show forth the odour of good fame, of holy life, of most true doctrine, and of Evangelical Perfection to all Christian People. I ask of You therefore, Lord Jesus Christ, Father of mercies, that You should not consider our ingratitude, but be ever mindful of Your most abundant pity which You have shown towards it, that it may be ever the place and habitation of those who know You truly, and glorify Your most blessed and glorious Name, for ever and ever, Amen." And having said this he was carried to Saint Mary of the Angels, where, having completed forty years of his age and twenty years of perfect penitence, he, in the year of Our Lord 1227, on the fourth of the Nones of October, passed away to the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom he loved with his whole heart, with his whole mind, his whole soul, his whole strength, his most ardent desire, and fullest affection, following Him most perfectly, running after Him most swiftly, and at the last reaching Him most gloriously, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, for ever and ever, Amen.

Here endeth the Mirror of perfection of the state of the Friar Minor, in which one can sufficiently behold the perfection of his vocation and profession. All praise, all glory be to God the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

About This EBook

The text of this ebook is taken from The Mirror of Perfection by Brother Leo of Assisi, translated by Robert Steele as printed in 1912.

The cover image is a detail of a painting of Saint Francis of Assisi by El Greco, cathdral of Toledo, Spain.

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